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[From the miniature at Hertford House]

THE EMPRESS EUGENIE AFTER HER MARRIAGE

THE LIFE OF THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

by

ROBERT SENCOURT

WITH A FOREWORD BY

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BERWICK AND ALBA

“Trois cents pages que paraîtront quand il plaira à
Dieu et qui feront que les gens qui ne sont pas encore
nés deviendront amoureux d’elle ”

MÉRIMÉE

(after seeing the Empress for the last time)

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A

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

PRINCE BIOGRAPHE DES ANGLAIS
ET LE PLUS DÉLICAT DES CŒURS,
AVEC LES HOMMAGES D'ADMIRATION,
DE RECONNAISSANCE, D'AMITIÉ,
CETTE VIE
DE LA DERNIÈRE SOUVERAINE DES FRANÇAIS

*“Vous verrez, dans une seule vie toutes les extrémités
des choses humaines.”—BOSSUET.*



FOREWORD

THE Empress Eugénie is a figure who will often be the subject of discussion but never of indifference. She herself, however, would never write her memoirs, and repeatedly asked me to deny the authenticity of any that should appear. It was to me, as her closest relative, that the great lady whom I had always loved and revered, left her family papers and personal souvenirs ; they fitly remain in Spain, the country where she was born, which she always loved, and where she died. These, in view of the recommendations Mr. Sencourt brought to me, I placed freely at his disposal : he is the first to have had access to this material, though his vivid portraiture of her character and life are his own work. He has done more than recapture the charm of a great personality ; with the use not only of my family documents, but also of those in the State Archives at Vienna, he has added the results of new discoveries to his story of a noble and historic life.

ALBA.

P R E F A C E

IT has only just become possible to write a life of the Empress Eugénie. The one reliable biography, that of Miss Jane T. Stoddart, was published twelve years before the death of its subject, and drew on no letters or other manuscript documents. Indeed, before the publication of M. Paléologue's book, that of the Comtesse des Garets, of the Letters of Mérimée to the Countess of Montijo, Lord Cowley's papers, and Count Corti's *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*, essential material was missing: though essential material had been supplied just after the Empress's death by M. Filon, M. Lucien Daudet, and Dame Ethel Smyth. Each faithfully gave an essential aspect: but none attempted to tell the story of the breathing woman, whose strong personality and whose part in history had occasioned question.

It was M. Paléologue himself who suggested to me that I should search the archives of Vienna. One account of what they contained has already been published in a book by Professor Oncken of the University of Berlin: *Die Politik des Kaisers Napoleon III und die Uersprunge des Kriegs von 1870*. But Professor Oncken, by publishing papers in which the Empress Eugénie appears to demand the aggrandisement of France at any cost, and omitting from publication others, in the same files, in which she makes it clear that the French sovereigns intended never to go beyond the diplomacy of peace, has developed a thesis which with difficulty survives the scrutiny of less exclusively Prussian historians. I have noted

both those documents which he quotes and those which he omitted.

The Vienna archives, which were opened to me with the greatest courtesy by the Austrian officials, at the instance of Lord Monteagle and ^{Mr.} Le Rougetel, then Chargé d’Affaires, throw much light on the politics of Europe at the most critical period of the nineteenth century, the years in which, as my narrative shows, Bismarck involved Prussia in wars against Denmark, against Austria, and against France. A great part was played by the Empress in attempting to settle by diplomacy the disturbance of balance of power inevitably introduced by the rising nationalities of Prussia and Italy, a disturbance which left Europe restless for fifty years before 1914. This part I have attempted to elucidate by extracts from the Vienna documents, which I have studied in comparison with those in the Archives Nationales of France, and in the Record Office in London.

As for the remaining record of the Empress’s extraordinary life—which my friend Mrs. Wharton has called “the last of the fairy tales”—I am indebted above all to the Duke of Alba, who not only supplied me with a valuable memorandum of his own, and many personal details, but also gave me free access to the papers which he inherited from the Empress herself, as well as to other archives of his own family. With the conscience of one who is himself a historian, he never asked me to suppress a single detail of what I found. This invaluable record has been supplemented by other Spanish relatives and friends of Her Majesty: the Duke of Peñaranda, the Duchess of Santoña, and the Marquis de Arcicollar. The Conde de las Navas, at the instance of Doña Concepcion Heredia, Lady in Waiting to the Queen, kindly arranged for me to search the archives

of the Royal Palace at Madrid. The Mother Superior of the oblates of the Most Holy Redeemer at Carabanchel showed me the house and grounds, formerly the home of the Conde de Mora, now of fallen women, in which the Empress had passed so much of her girlhood with her mother and Prosper Mérimée. In France I am indebted above all to Mlle Pauline de Bassano, who placed at my disposal a number of letters from the Empress, as well as papers of her own father, the Duc de Bassano, and a report of Sir Evelyn Wood referring to the death of the Prince Imperial ; to the Princesse de la Moskowa and the Marquise d'Espeuilles, who kindly allow me to quote from letters in their possession ; and for further information to the Princess Murat, Prince Poniatowski, Count and Countess Baciocchi, the Countess of Viel-Castel, to Mlle Marie Louyse des Garets, to M. Paléologue and M. Gabriel Hanotaux of the Académie Française, to the Baron and Baroness of Beauverger, to M. Lucien Daudet, to M. Ferdinand Bac, to Dom Fernand Cabrol, O.S.B., Abbot of Farnborough, who placed at my disposal the monumental MS. of the late Dom Elie Herment, to M. Jean Bourguignon, M. André Girodie, and M. Pierre Josserand ; in Austria, to Count Corti and Baron Jean de Bourgoing ; in Germany, to the Grand Duke of Hesse, Prince Reuss, Countess Lerchenfeld, and Frau von Meister ; among Americans, to Mrs. Wharton, to Mrs. Royall Tyler who kindly supplied me with photographs of Itelezi taken by her brother the Conte de Castel Vecchio ; to Professor Carlton Hayes of Columbia, and Professor Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard ; in England, first to Princess Beatrice for permission to quote from unpublished letters of Queen Victoria ; to Evelyn, Duchess of Wellington, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Marquis of

Huntly, the Countess of Jersey, to Lord and Lady Edward Gleichen, to Lord Newton, to the Honourable Lady Mallet, to Lady Currie, to Colonel the Honourable F. H. Wellesley who has supplied me with several unpublished extracts from Lord Cowley's papers, to Dame Ethel Smyth, to Olga, Lady Egerton, to General Sir Aylmer Haldane, to Miss Rosa Pease, to Miss Isabel Vesey, to Mr. Stephen Gaselee, librarian of the Foreign Office, to the Rev. F. A. Simpson, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, who has corrected my proofs, to Mr. Julian Sampson, and not least to Miss Amy Paget and Miss Minnie Cochrane.

For the pictures I reproduce (all unpublished in England), I am indebted to the kindness of the Duke of Alba, of the Duke of Peñaranda, of M. Ferdinand Bac, of M. Jean Bourguignon, Keeper of the Collection at Malmaison, and to Mr. S. S. Camp, Keeper of the Wallace Collection.

As for those who seek the French or Spanish originals of the many unpublished MSS I quote, I would refer them to the translations of my book which I have entrusted to my friends, the French to M. Charles du Bos, the Spanish to the Duke of Canalejas.

It will be seen that I have had unusual opportunities of obtaining from unpublished as well as published documents, and from direct witnesses, an account of the Empress which differs widely from that which many who did not themselves know her have kindly urged upon me. I hope I may be forgiven if I have followed direct witness against the traditions of gossip. I have dealt with my evidence as justly as I can, and hold close to my authorities. The admiration of the Empress which my study has gradually awoken in me I have not attempted to disguise.

ROBERT SENCOURT.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE DUKE OF ALBA'S FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE.	ix
PUBLISHED SOURCES OF INFORMATION	xvii
I. THE DAUGHTER OF SPAIN	23
II. THE THRONE	54
III. THE GLITTER OF THE COURT	99
IV. SOWN FURROWS OF FATE	124
V. THE GRASP OF POWER	157
VI. THE RIPENING OF DOOM	186
VII. HEIGHTENING TENSION	201
VIII. THE TOURNÉE IN THE EAST	226
IX. THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR	237
X. THE FLIGHT INTO STORM	270
XI. THE SAD TRANSITION	292
XII. THE PRINCE IMPERIAL	309
XIII. YEARS OF FORTITUDE	337
XIV. THE FINAL VINDICATION	356
APPENDIX	375
INDEX	381

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AFTER HER MARRIAGE. From the miniature at Hertford House	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
THE COUNTESS OF MONTIJO. By Jose Madrazo. From the Duke of Peñaranda's portrait	36
THE COUNTESS OF MONTIJO. From the miniature by Pommagrac in the Duke of Alba's Collection	96
THE DUCHESS OF ALBA. From the portrait by Winterhalter in the possession of the Duke of Alba	152
THE SIAMESE AMBASSADORS AT THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III. From the picture by Gérôme at Versailles	180
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE. From the bust by Carpeaux at Malmaison	222
THE PRINCE IMPERIAL. From an unpublished photograph in the possession of the Duke of Alba	314
THE PRESENT DUKE OF ALBA : IN THE BACKGROUND THE PALACIO DE LIRIA. From the portrait by Zuloaga	340
THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE. From the drawing by M. Ferdinand Bac	358

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I

THE DAUGHTER OF SPAIN

*Quid dignum memorare tuis, Hispania, terris
Vox humana valet?*

CLAUDIAN.

The national temperament, sombre as it is, is a baroque temperament, full of fancies and extravagances, warlike, religious to the verge of superstition, yet inconsequential, and in Spain the baroque style, carried to a degree of ornateness unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, compels admiration for its dignity and splendour.

BERNARD BEVAN in *Spanish Art*
(*Burlington Magazine Monograph*).

'Tis the great gardener grafts the excellence
On wildings where he will.

BROWNING : *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*.

I

MARIA MANUELA, Countess first de Teba and afterwards de Montijo, was one of those dauntless and glittering women who move as much by instinct as by stratagem towards the seats of power. The daughter of a Scottish wine merchant in Malaga, she married young, and at once held her own with feudal patents of nobility. Mr. George Ticknor, an American man of letters, who wrote a history of Spanish literature, knew her. She was, he said, both original and bewitching. An Andalusian grace, an English genuineness, a French facility—these marked her out in 1818 to Mr. Ticknor, who insisted that she

was always a true Spaniard.¹ In her early years her features had a certain hardness, and it may be guessed that wit and ambition made her difficult to live with, but she had from early and until late in life a succession of admirers.

Her marriage had allied her with one of the noblest families in Spain, and though she was yet poor she planned further ascents for her children. The first of these, a daughter, was born in Malaga in 1824. But the associations of her youth must have been galling to the Countess, and her marriage left room for other cares. She moved with her husband to Granada, where she made more than one new friend before her second child was born.²

There was something restless in the air. The social life of Spain had been for years riotous both in Church and State. The nation itself was in upheaval. On May 6, 1826—the fifth anniversary of the death of Napoleon—an earthquake had shaken her nerves as she waited for her delivery in the city where Moorish building and legend met Spanish conquest in a glow of southern light. Taking refuge beneath a tree in the garden, she³ found that her situation had become critical. So in the open air of Andalusia, scented with orange blossom and syringa, within sight of

where the flinty crest
Of wild Nevada ever gleams with snow,

with Nature and society both rumbling in convulsion, was born Eugénia de Guzman.⁴

¹ G. Ticknor : *Life, Letters, and Journals*.

² G. Hanotaux : *Roue de Paris*, Jan. 1, 1930 ; cf. Viel Castel : *Mémoires*.

³ *El Defensor de Granada*, July 13, 1920. The house was 12 Calle de Gracia, Granada.

⁴ Her baptismal certificate is on page 190, Book 21, of Baptisms in the Church of Santa Maria Magdalena at Granada.

2

Her mother was ready to take advantage of any chance that arose in a shaken country : before long, in spite of her poverty, she had migrated to Madrid, and was soon engaged in fresh adventures.

On what could she make her claims? She was the daughter of no common wine-merchant. Her father, William Kirkpatrick, belonged to a good old Scottish family, of which a branch had been raised to dignity, with the baronetcy of Closeburn. But William's father, having taken the Bonnie Prince's side, had come down in the world. He was, moreover, one of nineteen children, some of whom—among nineteen inevitably—came down still further. William himself did well enough in Malaga. He entered a business in fruit and wine run by M. de Grivegnée, an emigrant from Liège, embraced the Catholic religion, and married his employer's daughter. It was the age of sherry, and there was money in the wines of Spain. The business prospered mildly.

It occurred to him that his position would be improved if he were appointed Consul for the new republic in America. A gentleman of Massachusetts, George Cabot, traded with Spain not only in rum, fish, and iron, but in sherry and madeira, and had made friends with him. Cabot, who had entertained President Washington at Beverley in 1789, was made a Senator in June of that year.¹ The social predilections of the Cabots were, as is well known, very exclusive indeed, and certainly George Cabot could not but be mindful of his responsibilities when he wrote to Washington to have Kirkpatrick appointed Consul.

¹ Information supplied by Professor S. E. Morison of Harvard, from the records of the Cabot family.

So with this American importance on one side, and the wine business on the other, the daughters of Kirkpatrick and his Belgian wife had grown up. It was while Napoleon was at St. Helena that Maria Manuela had caught, and held, the attention of a Spanish nobleman with a limp and a patch over one eye who had fought on Napoleon's side in the Peninsular War, had been wounded, and who, some said, had met her travelling home from school in Paris. This was Cipriano de Guzman y Palafox y Porto Carrero, Count de Teba, a man who could establish kinship with two of Spain's great ducal families, Olivares and Medina Sidonia. He was the younger brother of the Count of Montijo. He could trace his descent through a Spanish lineage very different from that of the Kirkpatricks or even the Grivegnée. His house was already distinguished in 1291 when Alonzo Perez de Guzman, then Governor of Tarifa, rather than surrender the citadel, at the price of the life of his son whom the Moors held as a hostage, had actually thrown down a dagger for the Moors to kill the boy. In the seventeenth century Doña Luisa Francesca de Guzman married the Duke of Braganza, who ruled in Portugal as John IV, and the first Count de Teba was the nephew of Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon. The Count of Montijo, Don Cipriano's brother, had been far more prominent in the Court of King Ferdinand VII than Cipriano had ever been on the side of the Bonapartes.

The two brothers were both men of enterprise. The elder, Eugenio, had once penetrated the royal palace at Aranjuez at the head of a troop, and held in his power the favourite, Marshal Godoy, as well as King Ferdinand and Queen Maria Luisa. But the Spanish nation was quite unmoved, and the Count de Montijo thought it more expedient to

retire.¹ Cipriano had followed the Napoleonic army back to France, and commanded the pupils of the Polytechnic School at the defence of Paris in 1814.² He was the last to fire a cannon at Buttes-Chaumont. With his pale face rather handsome, in spite of one eye gone, he cherished confused dreams of progress and deliverance.³ But naturally he was no hero in his own country, since he had taken the invaders' side. He bore himself, however, with some pride as one who loved liberty and loved France. And by this he made himself of advantage to his daughter fourteen years after his death.

But soon after the Peninsular War was over he was partially reconciled to the Bourbon dynasty, and before December 15, 1817, succeeded in obtaining permission to marry the daughter of the wine-merchant; for it was urged that her lineage embraced the old sovereigns of Scotland. "Let the good man," said King Ferdinand, "wed with the daughter of Fingal." And the trade in liquors was for a season ignored. Could it be otherwise? There are few families where every branch and every episode are equally distinguished, and surely first to ancestors is applied the principle of the survival of the fittest.⁴ The heredity of command is subtler than the records of a heralds' college.

But marriage was for Doña Manuela only a beginning of adventures. Her husband, whose politics had always been too liberal, was soon compromised, and was sent by the authorities, first to Santiago de Compostella, then to Granada.

¹ Filon : *Mérimée et ses amis*.

² J. N. Primoli : "L'Enfance d'une Souveraine" (*Revue de Deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1923).

³ Filon : *Mérimée et ses amis*.

⁴ F. A. Simpson : *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France*.

While he and she were exiled from Madrid she learnt that Don Eugenio, who had married a young girl of no family, was expecting an heir. This, from what she knew of him, appeared to her hardly likely, so she sought to return to Madrid to claim her right to be present at the birth of the heir apparent. She arrived at Valladolid when the King was there, and as a *grande d'Espagne* was placed in the same quadrille as he. He soon noticed her, and before long he granted her the request. So she arrived in time to prevent a changeling being introduced into her sister-in-law's bed. She thus preserved the Montijo inheritance for her own children.¹

3

Her husband, either from love of Paris or from exacerbation with her volatility, had meanwhile been in France. When, in 1830, he was on his way back, he found himself in the same diligence with a Frenchman of twenty-seven who had already written distinguished prose, and who sought refuge from the sensibility of passion in an air of mockery which threw a veil over his morals. With the cold and slightly suspicious manner, and on his feelings the masked expression of an Englishman, and not what could be called handsome, he was yet an attractive young man. He had thick eyebrows, dark eyes, and the health of his Norman stock. But he was not in the least like a peasant. His manners and his phrases were elegance itself. Mischievous and delicately cynical, pale, slight, and erect, he had a wit that enabled him to flatter with discretion, and to display learning without pedantry. But for fear of being a dupe, wrote Taine, he distrusted not only

¹ J. N. Primoli : *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1923.

science and art, but love and life, so that he finished by being the dupe of his distrust.

His name was Prosper Mérimée and he was already beginning to be famous. He had written not only on Cromwell, but on Charles IX, as well as two pleasing phantasies called *Guzla* and *Gazul*, and a curious little model for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* in which La Perichole sacrificed her lover before La Carrosse du Saint Sacrement. He and Don Cipriano exchanged courtesies in the diligence, and he delighted in exerting his charm on the wife to whom Don Cipriano presented him in the Calle del Sordo in Madrid. The woman who had aroused the enthusiasm of Mr. Ticknor in 1818 did not fail to hold the enthusiasm of another American, Mr. Washington Irving, when he met her in Spain some years later. But she made a far deeper impression on M. Mérimée. She was a woman of something more than his own age and a striking beauty, of lively wits, with a brain that knew the most surprising things ; her manners made still more alluring her personal grace. Her fine features, marked by relentless eyes and a prominent nose, pointed to the ability of mind which was mingled with something which, if it was not beauty, was a generous power of feeling as well as of provoking interest, especially in men. "She was a good and excellent woman," as a friend of her own sex put it long after, in defence of a reputation violently assailed, "who inspired in men a real sympathy."¹

When Mérimée met her in Madrid she could hardly resist him—and why should she when he had already won the hearts of the little girls, Paquita and Eugenia, who were playing around her skirts ? Eugenia was especially delighted with the young

¹ Countess Tascher de la Pagerie : *Mon Séjour aux Tuileries*.

foreigner, whose teasing would intrigue any little girl, who gave her on his knee her first lessons in riding, and who, when she might have hurt her little head falling, found that his arms were there to save it. While Paquita was dark and pale, Eugenia had a lovely fair complexion, tiny feet, and red gold hair. She was not yet four years old, but her blue eyes were made still more striking by an expression of meditative and almost sad amazement, which some thought was due to her being precipitated into the world by an earthquake. While the children played around, the mother told the young writer her own romances, and his mind was stored with anecdotes of the Campeador and Don Pedro. There was one which he later turned into *Carmen*. They would be off to a Corrida together, or for a visit to the Prado to admire Velazquez, who put now and again into his portraits the background of blue mountains which lent beauty to Madrid. While Velazquez showed them in compositions masterfully arranged with what strength the Spaniard can hold a fact, even while he subdues it to picturesqueness, Goya, who had died two years before, directed their appreciation to his understanding of individuals. "Fancy wedded to reason," he once wrote, "is the mother of the arts and the origin of their marvels." What we notice about each of his portraits, as indeed about his maniacs, his witches, and his animals, is the force with which they live. It was something which the Countess herself understood and could manifest.

Hers was a spirit which found its home in Madrid. Castile, with its plateau and sierras, its severity and its magnificence, its quixotry and its common sense, its closeness to Nature and earth on the one side and on the other the fervour of its supernatural faith, stamped itself upon the family of Montijo.

The society in Madrid is at once the most exclusive and the simplest in the world. Its shrewdest minds knew life with a sovereign simplicity, not from books. Maria Manuela and her daughters, like all Spanish women, were accustomed in church to kneel on the bare stone, in the arena to see blood flow ; in the bracing air of Castile, where a piercing wind blows off snow beneath a southern sun, their blood would alternately freeze and burn ; in Andalusia they would sit in courts, breathing exotic scents, while fountains and the guitar mingled their music. Such a country as Spain cannot have the polished surface of French life : it is fiercer, more vibrant, more naïf. Life, both for Mérimée, for Doña Manuela, and for the children, was full of flavour there.

4

It was in 1834 that Eugenio de Montijo's death left his brother in possession of a number of historic titles and considerable estates. No longer did his little girls need to ride twenty miles across country on unshod ponies to regale themselves at the house of a rich relation. But their father, who was then well on towards sixty, kept his tastes for simplicity and retirement. He would have preferred that his daughters should be brought up as though they were still poor, and that they should be inured to hardship and privation.¹ He carried it so far as to send them about without stockings, to refuse to let them have umbrellas, to say that they should wear linen dresses in all weathers,² and to forbid the Countess to take them with her in her carriage. Their mother thought very differently from him on this and on

¹ Ethel Smyth : *Streaks of Life*.

² Agnes Carey : *With the Empress Eugénie*.

other subjects : the conflict between his parsimony and her ambition was accentuated by acrimony in other relations. Their means were now such that they were no longer forced to live together. An outbreak of mutiny provided the excuse for separation. Monks and Jesuits had been murdered at the very altar, and Madrid had been two days without a Government. Little Eugenia, who had seen a fount of blood leap up from the wound of a stabbed friar, lived in a town of knifings and shootings. It is possible that the third child of the marriage—a son, who died while still very young—made them also really anxious about the children. In any case, the Countess set out on July 18, 1834, with her children for Barcelona on her way north. They duly arrived in Paris, where they stayed for full five years and where the little boy died.¹ The new Count de Montijo, whom his little Eugenia adored, soon followed them.

As the Countess passed the frontier with her two children, they were entertained on July 29 by the Maréchal de Castellane, who gave them letters of introduction to his relations at Toulouse. Tall, and preserving still much of the fascination of her earlier youth, the Countess impressed the Maréchal, and not alone the Maréchal, as a remarkably clever woman.²

5

It was not very long before by some means they were again in touch with M. Mérimée. The young Frenchman, to whom women meant so much, could hardly have forgotten to leave his address with the

¹ Primoli says that the Countess had arrived in Paris before Eugenio died, but he is often incorrect (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1923).

² Castellane : *Mémoires*, i.

vivacious Countess who exchanged admiration with him. He soon introduced to them Count Alexandre de Laborde and a more remarkable person, Henri Beyle, a man with a high brow, keen eyes, and the lips of a humorist, who would display the shape of his hands, and was always throwing a glance at the mirror. He was beginning to be known in the world of books as "Stendhal": a man who wrote about love with very great frankness, and was far from being a conventionalist. To him, wrote M. Charles Du Bos, Mérimée was as the crescent to the full moon. He would throw his memory back for twenty years, or tell the little girls countless stories of the great wars in which their father had lost his eye. During Napoleon's Italian campaign Beyle had been a lieutenant of dragoons. He was at Moscow in 1812, and he accompanied the army through the horrors of the retreat. While the Montijos were in Paris, he was busy with *La Chartreuse de Parme*, which was published the year they came back to Spain.

Stendhal found only one example of perfect style: the Code Napoléon. He tried to present life, as he wrote on love, analytically, dispassionately, intellectually. His vision was of the sharpest, and he could, when he wished, call up pictorial images of startling vividness. Writing about Waterloo in *La Chartreuse*, he shows us its insignificance, its grotesqueness, and its irrelevant and incoherent detail: but the effect of his narratives was dynamic.

Yet, through all the changes of age, there had never been a moment when he was not in love; he was devoted to beauty: it was with the "*jouissances d'ange*" that he first heard at Novara the *Matrimonio Segreto* of Cimarosa, and he said he would walk thirty miles through the mud to hear a good performance of *Don Giovanni*. His sense of values was

impregnated with what he called his *espagnolisme*—his immense admiration for the noble and high-resounding in speech or act or character.¹ Such was the man who alternated with Prosper Mérimée in visiting the children of Madame de Montijo, and to hold them on his knee while he told them stories which transplanted the little girls' Spanish imaginations on to the soil of France, but with the grains of Spanish earth still clinging to their roots. Eugenia was already so attractive as to give a new turn to the taste of genius.

It was on Thursday that Stendhal came to the Montijos, and the children were allowed to stay up till nine to listen to him: they ate nothing, so impatient were they for his stories. Every time the bell rang they rushed to the door: and, each clinging to one hand, when at last he did come they installed him in his arm-chair beside the fireplace, and waited for him to talk of the Emperor he taught them afresh to adore—for they adored Napoleon already because he had personally decorated their father. "We wept, we laughed, we groaned, we went raving mad," said Doña Eugenia. When they heard that the English sent him to die at St. Helena, "The Spaniards," they cried, "would never have been such cowards as to send that great man to die far away in that island."

The Countess of Montijo would claim that they were tyrannising over him.

No, he would answer. "*Il n'y a plus que les petites filles qui sentent les grandes choses.*"² (1)

Stendhal would bring pictures, and Eugenia kept hers of the Battle of Austerlitz to her death. The religion of the Empire, which they had imbibed from

¹ Lytton Strachey: *Books and Characters*.

² Primoli, *op. cit.* The French passages are translated, for those that need them, in the Appendix (pp. 375-80) according to bracketed numbers.

their father, took a great hold of their imaginations, and seemed to them the criterion and end of life, when the genius of Stendhal distracted their attention from the circle which centred round the House of Bourbon.

To be worthy of his little friends, Stendhal was willing to be innocent and content to be simple. Did any eyes ever give him so pure a pleasure as those of the little girls who listened from his knee? "When you are grown up," he said with a quaint emphasis to little Eugenia, "you will marry Monsieur le Marquis de Santa Cruz. Then you will forget all about me, and I shan't bother any more about you."¹ When Eugenia was sixteen, however, the flesh of Stendhal embraced the dust, and his passion and analysis were occupied, no doubt, on still abstruser problems.

6

When Stendhal had finished his stories, which in their consciousness, their actuality, and their baroque flair for effect suited so well the Spanish temperament of Eugenia, Mérimée would come in and give them a lesson in writing, correct their French, and take them off to buy some bonbons.

Mérimée was one of those who, once they have tasted the friendship of women, regard it ever after as amongst the greatest blessings of their life. Among his friends none was more enthusiastic than the Countess of Montijo. Mérimée, who was himself but the son of an unsuccessful painter, had powerful friends in Paris, and introduced them to the Prefect of Police, Delessert, of whose daughter Valentine, as he confided to the Countess, he was the lover.² The

¹ Filon : *Memoirs of the Empress Eugénie*.

² *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo*, Paris, 1930.

friendship of Madrid deepened, and the two met almost every day.

Among all Mérimée's friends in Paris, none was more remarkable than she. Her energy, her temper, her inexhaustible vitality which neither age nor weakening sight could lessen, hastened to seize a field for their play. As she spoke, said Mérimée himself, it seemed to her hearers that every wish was at that moment being fulfilled. Madame de Montijo had a good base for her ambition: patience, coolness, relentless will, and the optimism without which one neither can lead nor dominate, made her the mistress of men and the mistress of events. There was something both of Becky Sharp about her and of the Countess de Saldar de Sancorvo: one saw character and ambition in every feature, from her high prominent forehead to her short and prominent chin. Her nose was fine, but with a strong curve: her well-chiselled lips were extremely firm: most remarkable of all, the steady look of her eyes, beneath their drooping lids, told of an extraordinary mingling of ambition with sympathy. Here was a *maîtresse femme*.

Though her temperament was in complete subjection to mind and will, she gave at times a certain impression of abandon. "Their theories are laxer than ours," wrote Madame de Tascher de la Pagerie *à propos* of Spanish women, "though their love is from the heart and calculation rarely enters into it." She had, besides, an open and curious mind. Current literature, political intrigue, and the history of the past she both loved and understood. Librarians, professors, academicians, and keepers of records were woken to a feverish life by her, and then turned into the slaves of Mérimée. She knew just what brain or just what book could tell her what she wanted to



[From the Dule of Peñaranda's portrait

THE COUNTESS OF MONTIJO. By Jose Madrazo

know. She even inspired her friend with a sort of philosophy of history : it was that of Disraeli and Carlyle : it was the cult of great men. Her ideal was the man who mastered others and led them, how they knew not, towards his ends. Napoleon, of course, was both her husband's hero and her own. Some years later a Bonaparte came to Madrid, a prince who was witty, handsome, and attractive. He was a Bonaparte, but not *the Bonaparte* for whom in her view Europe was again waiting.

When her husband died she was, before two years were over, a leader of society in Madrid, and one of the most important supporters of Narvaez. In her domain at Carabanchel she planted trees, and, with the powerful imagination which opened to her the avenues of success, they were hardly in the ground before she saw them full grown and refreshed herself in their shadow. In her theatre there she essayed grand opera. She had every one around her dancing and singing ; she made marriages and made amusements up to the day of her death. When her sight failed, she would walk into chairs or closed doors rather than admit an infirmity. A cousin of Ferdinand de Lesseps, she essayed like him the impossible—and did it. She scattered pleasures round her and made joy an obligation. All were delighted with the ready-made delights except the spirits of independence, who know no happiness but what they create for themselves.¹ “ She wished to make everybody happy,” said her daughter, “ but in her own way, not in theirs.”² At the Plaza del’ Angel in Madrid, the woman who twenty years before had been obscure in Malaga now reigned as a queen of fashion. Her receptions in Madrid gathered together

¹ Filon : *Mérimée et ses amis*.

² Agnes Carey : *With the Empress Eugénie*.

all who were most select and most distinguished either for rank or for personal eminence in Spanish society. To have been invited to the Countess of Montijo's Tertulia, in which, it was noticed, the English were made especially welcome, was considered a sort of passport to the best society in Madrid.¹

But although she knew Paris, and even England, the Countess de Montijo was wholly a Spaniard. She had the mixture of pride and ease which mark the *grands d'Espagne*, whose acquaintances call them by their Christian names, but who never forget the blood of their families. She knew the secret of fascinating men, and, with a woman so witty and charming, a man she favoured soon had the sensation of intimacy. She loved high emotions and adventures, and expected little virtue from men. One can hardly imagine that Mérimée, or Aguado, or Narvaez, or the Duc d'Ossuna, or Lord Clarendon (for her intimates crowded thick on one another) *all* asked from her merely platonic friendship. Yet, in a world where virtue was thought almost an impossibility, and where passion sparkled in alternations of vivacity and languor, the Catholic Church commanded a devoted faith, in which men and women, after a night of gaiety, and perhaps of carousal, would bend in sincere devotion before the Crucifix, confess their sins, thrill with devotion to the innocence of the Virgin, and venerate with a fervour which grew resolute for charity and sacrifice the mysteries which made real for them the presence of the Redeemer. To the Spaniard the Catholic religion, though it seldom brought chastity into competition with enjoyment, was an absorbing reality which attracted their devoted interest and turned loyalty to a passion. It had a

¹ *The Times*, Jan. 21, 1853.

Moorish fanaticism at times and a Moorish sensuality. But they were always ready to lay down their lives for the Holy Cross, and indeed they had the temperament of a nation which for centuries had fought for the faith against the infidel, who bore the standard of the Papacy into the New World, and whose hearts thrilled with fervour at the names of Jesus and Mary.

Such was the atmosphere of brilliance, of hardship, of enjoyment, and of religious fervour which the lady from Malaga and Madrid brought into the world where Mérimée had made himself friends by mockeries which were too polished to affect the warmth of his devotion to admired women. The centre of it was the brilliant circle which gathered in the hotel of Count Alexandre de Laborde. There the Montijos met the personages of diplomacy and the greatest families of France : the Duc de Richelieu, Madame de Castellane, the Duc et Duchesse de Broglie, Comte et Comtesse Philippe de Ségur, the Comte de Noailles, and the Duchesse de Galliera. There also they met Princesse Mathilde Bonaparte, who was being sought in marriage by her cousin, the new heir of Napoleon, who afterwards reigned as Emperor of the French, and in whose house that Emperor, after Princesse Mathilde had married Count Demidoff, met in years to come Eugenia de Guzman.

7

In this circle the Countess de Montijo soon learnt that she could not do better than send her little girls to the Sacred Heart nuns, who had a big convent in the Rue de Varennes, in the heart of the hotels of the great families. This choice had in itself significance. The Ladies of the Sacred Heart, as they were called, were then a comparatively new Order, for

they had been founded by Ste. Sophie Barat in 1799. From many points of view they recalled the ideals of St. Ignatius Loyola, and their pupils have been sometimes heard to speak of them as "female Jesuits." They combined wealth with an intensive piety, and with these, it must not be forgotten, considerable intellectual efficiency. Their field was the education of the daughters of aristocracy, or at least of wealth. Admitting that the world could make its own claims, and making many accommodations with the love of luxury, they reserved the greater luxuries for the chapel, where everything was done to make worship fascinating and to make it fervent. Their system aimed thus at impregnating fashion with faith, and kept the world subordinate, even as it admitted every claim the world could make. In all this there was something as Spanish as it was French : for it combined the mystical fervours of St. Margaret Mary with that life of worldly brilliance which had first been admitted by the Society of Jesus as part of a spiritual system, and which had been so beautifully completed in the counsels of St. Francis de Sales. But it was, of course, the baroque element in it which appealed to Eugenia de Guzman—for to her the world was already a passion and faith a fact—and it was through her *goût de spectacle* that she, like many a Spaniard, learnt best to appreciate the claim which the Redeemer makes upon the heart, and which is answered in the passionate echo :

*Brûlez mon cœur
Au feu du Vôtre.*

The Guzman girls learnt in the convent not only the tastes of the Faubourg St. Germain, at the same time as they intensified and accommodated to France that allegiance to the Church Militant which is the

soul of the Spanish Catholic. That the nuns developed their characters is clear : one could not say they changed them. Proud with the easy pride of little *grandes d'Espagne*, full of courage, and with tempers that could bring them to fight and rage, they made things by no means easy for either of their English governesses. When Eugenia came to Paris, she was a young demon, now jumping on the sofas, now replacing her ponies with arm-chairs, or with Mérimée, forced to come down on all-fours to amuse her. Her gymnastic instructor, Colonel Amoros, noted in 1838¹ that she was temperamentally excitable ; that she was full of spirits and had a great taste for exercise ; that her character was kind, generous, active, firm. But for her second governess, Miss Flowers, she was too difficult to manage. Mérimée, who was one of those men so interested in other people's children that they seem to know they can have none of their own, preached a sermon on pride in support of the governess. "Poor Miss Flowers !" Doña Eugenia would say in after years—and indeed their governess never got them to pronounce their *h*'s.

"Learn to condemn all praise betimes,
For flattery is the nurse of crimes."²

She taught Eugenia to write. The child was full of affection, and devoted to her father. "*J'ai tant envi que tu vient,*" she wrote to him a little before her tenth birthday, "*que je crois que tu le jours tu va arrive, voila deja plus de trois semaines que je demand si tu arrivera bientot.*" (2)

So the letters run. "*Ah, mon cher Papa, que j'ai envie de te serrer dans mes bras. . . .*" "*Mon cher Papa vous*

¹ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

² *Ibid.*

pouvez pas vous imaginer combien je vous aime. . . ." "Ma chère Maman, j'ai bien de la peine de ne pas vous avoir vue. . . ." "Mon cher Papa, quand te verrai-je, mon cœur soupire après toi." (2) Sometimes the endearments would be varied with messages to a certain Abelino, whom also she wants to see again. Only once does she ask for anything: "*Veux tu m'envoyer de l'argent pour acheter un manchon, car je suis grande a present et je voudrais etre a la mode le 19 de ce mois: c'est ma fete.*"¹ On March 2, 1837, she had been struck by something else. "*Nous avons une drole de mode a Paris: ce sont les machines infernales.*"² (3)

On March 17, 1839, news arrived in Paris that the Count of Montijo was dying. The fact was that in those days, when mails still came by diligence, he had died before the news had reached the little girls, who were to set out two days after.

"You can't think how sad I am to see them start," wrote Mérimée.³ He had found them in good health, gay, and delighted to be starting home. But for him the parting was no joy. It would have taken very little to put him into the coach with them. He had never been more intrigued than when he found himself the tutor of these lovely children, behind whose children's eyes the woman was beginning to peep.

8

The death of the Count de Montijo left his wife in possession of many thousand pounds a year,⁴ a house in Madrid, an estate four miles out of the town at

¹ The Fête de Ste Eugenie was Nov. 15.

² The references are from unpublished letters in the Palacio de Liria.

³ *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo.*

⁴ Primoli put the Montijo income at 500,000 francs a year then the equivalent of £20,000. (*Deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1923.)

Carabanchel across the Manzanares, and the lovely daughters. The children did not care for their new companions in Madrid. "We have no girl friends," Eugenia wrote to Mérimée, "for the girls of Madrid are so stupid that they talk only of clothes, or for a change from that scandals about one another."¹ She wanted to be back in Paris to see the arrival of the ashes of Napoleon from St. Helena. But for a year or so she and her sister were sent to school in England, where their only friends were two young Indians with whom they tried to escape as stowaways.²

Eugenia was afraid of nothing; she was, in the phrase of Mérimée, *une lionne à tous crins* (4); she would risk any danger: but like many highly strung people—even in early childhood—she had a horror of a dead body.

Once, when an old family servant died at the age of eighty, she was asked, like the rest of the household, to kiss the dead man's hand. Her father, now cajoling, now threatening, tried to bring her near the body. When Paquita had quietly shown her the example and her turn came, she fled back and jumped out of an open window to the ground deep below. They were terrified that she had killed herself: but she had only a few bruises. After that her father gave up trying to force her to embrace corpses.³

In 1842 the Countess de Montijo was on her way to Paris to buy a trousseau for her eldest daughter. Paca de Guzman was a sweet, lovely Spanish girl, with beauty shining through her dark complexion as stars spangle the southern night. At eighteen she had already secured the grandest of the *grands*

¹ Primoli.

² M. Hanotaux, in *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo*.

³ Primoli, *op. cit.* Cf. Miss Vesey's MS.

d'Espagne, the Duke of Alba, who was also descended from James II of England. The Duke had princely wealth and the highest position at the Spanish Court. In the centre of an exquisite little park in the heart of Madrid, his home, the Palacio de Liria, was rich in the finest treasures of taste and of tradition : portraits by Titian and Goya hung upon its walls. Louis XV had sent it tapestries. And no social privilege was, or is, more prized in Madrid than to be entertained in it : no woman to whom all defer so readily as to its mistress. The sister's brilliant marriage could only enhance the devotion of a life-time ; for the sisters were simply devoted to each other. Now Doña Eugenia almost made her home in the Palacio de Liria, and here she encountered the one adventure of her heart.

The Marquis of Alcanizes, who bore also the title of Duke of Sexto, came very often to the Palace, and made love to her. And she, with the ardour of her blood fresh with the kindlings of youth, fell desperately in love with him. Letter after letter compromised the Marquis more freely. Then the full flow of Eugenia's trust blazed on the fact that the object of his passion was the Duchess, and that his suit with herself had been an exquisite, an elaborate, and a contemptible intrigue. A love requited by contempt is a torture as great as disillusion to a virile and martial nature in man or woman. In one of those fits of desperate fury which marked her temperament from early childhood to extreme old age, Doña Eugenia took poison—in the form of match heads dissolved in milk. The fact was discovered, but she refused an antidote. At last a desperate stratagem was employed. Her false lover was induced to come to her and ask her for his letters. The culminating deceit succeeded, as the less honest

ones had done. Her desperate devotion was transubstantiated to a ruthless contempt. "Like Achilles' spear," she told him, "he healed the wounds he made." And with a swift return to sanity she swallowed the antidote.¹

But to have found her hero a blackguard, who used the strongest passion of her heart as an ambush to entrap the honour of the sister she adored, gave an enduring shock to the heart of Eugenia. Her nature was too intensely passionate to abandon what it had so fiercely cherished, and her thoughts were fixed on him for years. But disillusion cankers love. The beautiful girl had learnt, already too late, that men betray. Through the seventy-five years which still remained to her of this world's life no charm could heal her gaze of that melancholy which, even when she was a child, had sheltered in her eyes. The sweet, musical stream which feeling gives to the life of woman had become one of those rivers which from time to time pour in floods down the picturesque valley marked for their course, amidst wild or charming scenery, leaving, when the waters subside, a bed of stones and sand.

9

But the Spanish girl was to show that a woman can be other than a woman's heart. She was, first of all, a Catholic, and accepted as the basis of life loyalty to an inward life and to an outward institution which existed to transcend the love of lovers. Her Church had been a fact to her, and it remained one, against which the infidelity of men could not prevail. But the power which might have been love now found an outlet for feats of courage and ambition. These, or acts of generosity, now mastered and

¹ Ethel Smyth : *Streaks of Life*.

relieved her. Though the glowing heart was still there, she did not win love. If marriage and a career were not banished from her thoughts, she seemed to turn to such a career as would make relations of the heart a triviality. For she wasted no time in sentimental misery. The other side of her nature showed her mettle. She plunged into sport. She would ride out bareback, and come back to fence and to swim. Twitted for her courage by a young English diplomat, she once plunged a penknife in her wrist. In her mother's gay circle, as we saw, dissipation itself was the taste. But Madrid hardly knew what to make of a young lady so unconventional and so active, one who from every point would dare anything. And indeed so fixed did the mastery of this habit become in her, that even when she had attained to positions where formality could hardly allow a moment of sportiveness, the dazzling girl would suddenly become a tomboy.

At other times the zeal of Doña Eugenia would turn in the same direction as Brook Farm. For in 1845 the fantasies of Fourier not only infatuated the idealists of Massachusetts : they had some vogue in Madrid. The restless nerve of Doña Eugenia was never entirely cushioned on Catholicism : in Egypt in 1869, as we shall see, she toyed with Egyptian ideas of death and longed to lie "in peace with Osiris." Through year after year in Paris she waited for tables to turn at spiritualistic séances, and up to extreme old age she allowed herself at times in private conversation to give liberal interpretations to the doctrines of her faith. In 1845 she was content to share the ideas which Albert Brisbane was importing into America, and which had rushed through the wild arena of Fourier's imagination. She became what was called a *phalanstérienne*.

Fourier had in common with Blake the idea that the unrestrained indulgence of human passion led to the full and free development of human nature ; that misery and vice spring from the unnatural restraints imposed by society on the gratification of desire ; that, as Blake wrote in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he who desires and acts not breeds pestilence ; and he regarded his principle of harmony among the passions as a discovery equal to that of Newton of the principle of mutual attraction among material bodies.

Society, he believed, must be evolved so as to give full scope to the mammoth development of human nature ; and he aimed at dividing society into departments or phalanges, each of which was to inhabit a *phalanstère*, where rich and poor would intermingle, and where people would not have to pass their lives in doing what they do not want. This was the theory that now appealed to the young idealists of Madrid, and which in fact made them political apostles of Rousseau. It answered to the liberal element in Doña Eugenia : for from the beginning she was one of those aristocrats of the type of Lafayette, who combine an innate sense of privilege and authority with a desire for the good of a nation as a whole, and a sense of great things in store for the masses.

While this fascinated one side of the Countess de Teba (for she was given the title her father had borne in his youth), it did not, of course, recommend her to the average young Spaniard. It was noticed that she had not the feminine charm of the Duchess of Alba. Her comparatively virile nature, her high and critical temper, her masculine freedom of energy, her decided mind and the touchiness of her nerves, made too strong a contrast to the contemporary ideal of clinging, devoted, womanly passion which survived

even among the Amazons of Spain. It was noticed that her mood was often *difficile*, her manners independent, that she had a talent for caricature. And she seemed so little disposed either to love or to be loved, that in spite of her vivacity and her power to attract admiration, she was not generally popular in her own country.¹

The death of King Ferdinand in 1832, after he had annulled the Salic law, placed the crown of Spain in the hands of his daughter Isabella, who was then three years old, with a sister slightly younger. The Queen Mother, Christina, was a feeble regent, and Spain had neither a will nor a government. Ferdinand's brother, Don Carlos, who had been excluded from the throne by the revocation of the Salic law, tried to defeat Christina with the aid of Catholic reactionaries. Christina drew an unwilling support from Liberals, who forced upon her a sort of parliamentary constitution, and who had attempted in 1831 to kidnap Isabella from the Palace, which they would have done but for hard fighting by eighteen of the guards at the head of a flight of stairs. In 1843, at the age of thirteen, the girl Queen was declared of age and the reins of power were thrust into her hands.

Madame de Montijo had long been watching things narrowly. She was of the Queen Regent's faction, but to Espartero she preferred the Dictator Ramon Narvaez, afterwards Duke of Valencia, with whom she worked for dominant power in Spain.

"An ugly, fat little man with a vile expression of countenance"—so Lord Malmesbury describes him²—was seen often at her house. When asked on his death-bed if he forgave his enemies, he answered that he had none. For he had seen to it that none re-

¹ Comtesse des Garets : *Impératrice Eugénie en Exil*.

² *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*.

mained. This was the man with whom Madame de Montijo now allied herself. Their chance came in the intrigues over Isabella's marriage.

Queen Isabella was, in 1845, not quite sixteen. But it was noticed that she had an inflammable temperament. "You don't know what these Spanish Princesses are like," it was said: "they have the devil inside them, and people have always said that unless we make haste the baby will be here before the husband."¹ It was therefore felt quite distinctly that there must be no unnecessary delay. Louis Philippe had long seen his opportunity. He had planned that Isabella should marry her cousin, the Duke of Cadiz, whom he knew to be incapable of producing children, while his own younger son, the Duc de Montpensier, should marry the Infanta Luisa Fernanda. Isabella, it is true, felt no attraction towards the wretched youth designed for her; but at a supper party at the Palace the Queen Mother, who had been won over to the schemes of Louis Philippe, worked up a wild carousal, in which she induced Isabella to fall in with the plan; and the Duc de Montpensier came to Madrid, where he was fascinated by the Duchess of Alba's sister, the Comtesse de Teba. It did not distract him from his original design, however, and the two Princesses were married on the same day (October 10) in 1846, with the Countess de Teba splendid among their maids of honour.

10

The young Queen was soon disillusioned with the arrangement, and her temperament remained what it early showed signs of being till 1868 when, in open scandal, she was dethroned and exiled. But a year

¹ Lytton Strachey: *Queen Victoria*.

after her marriage the Countess of Montijo secured the position of lady-in-waiting. "Desiring to show my royal appreciation of Doña Maria Manuela Kirkpatrick, Countess of Montijo, I have just appointed her my lady,"¹ wrote Isabella on April 4, 1847. For the Countess to be in the Court, however, was to control it. On October 6 the Queen, in consideration of her distinguished position and her loyalty to her own person, appointed her to the highest position in the administration of the Palace. She was not long to hold it, however. Her ceaseless activity, her rather acrid temper, her passionate temperament, her indisputable charm, and perhaps not least the brilliant loveliness of her daughter, may have conspired to make her position precarious with Queen Isabella, who herself was finding her married life far from easy. In a few weeks the Queen appointed the Marques de Miraflores as Governor of the Palace over the head of the Countess, and it was spitefully said that Madame de Montijo had been involved in an intrigue with a young Italian, who had finally stolen her diamonds. The truth was that Miraflores was an old enemy, and she refused to give in to him. When a Governor of the Palace was appointed, it relegated her position to one of inferior importance. She wrote to the Queen on December 16, offering her resignation. The Marques wrote on the same day, enclosing a letter addressed to the Countess, in which he accused her of plotting with Don Carlos against the Queen. "For me to remain in my post is impossible," he wrote, "as long as the Countess of Montijo remains in hers. . . . Since 1839, when I represented Your Majesty as Her Ambassador in Paris, I had encounters as heavy as they were unpleasant with this lady."

¹ Unpublished MS. in Royal Palace, Madrid.

The Countess resigned. Her mortified daughter, disappointed now even in the world, turned for consolation to the other basis of her life, the Catholic religion. Her ambition, her ardour, her vivacity, which lent to her beauty a glitter more than its own, seemed unable to find her satisfaction in the world. Four years had gone by since her sister had married Alba, and nothing had occurred to heal her heart's wound. Might she not be called to the highest of all vocations, that in which queens had more than once found a sublimer rôle than reigning? And her heart cried out for peace. As she entered the convent door, however, an aged nun gazed into her face with eyes that saw what some thought to be the delusions of a crazed brain, what Doña Eugenia took as prophecy. "Do not seek for rest within our walls, my daughter," she said; "you are called to adorn a throne."

[The Countess de Teba turned, therefore, abroad again. She and her mother renewed their old friendships at Paris and watched the fall of Louis Philippe, the rise to power of Louis Napoleon. Later, they travelled in Germany. In 1851 they were in London, and the Countess of Montijo renewed her intimate friendship with Lord Clarendon, who had been Ambassador in Madrid. She was presented with her two daughters at the Court of Albert and Victoria. The vivacity which jewelled Doña Eugenia's beauty seemed rarer in her air of distinction; and she was much admired in London. The Queen never forgot the grace of her curtsy, which was like that of a stemmed flower bent and released by the wind.

The next year, in the Pyrenees, they were the wonder of Eaux Bonnes. The young Countess retained the high-spiritedness which had startled

Madrid. She seemed never to tire. Dancing at night with a fine abandon, she would be up early in the morning for a long climb in the Pyrenees. In the intervals of amusement she gave up her time to succouring the wretched. Every morning they gathered before the hotel door to watch for her. From other villages came others who were lame and starving : a poor old blind cripple who could not move from his house managed to convey a message, and the day before she left Eaux Bonnes she went and pressed two Louis into his palsied hand. In the fervour of his gratitude, the old man cried out an echo of the Spanish nun : " May God reward you as you deserve ! God make you a queen." But of course she did not take this any more seriously than when she took a royal part in a charade.

II

So sport, charity, ambition, and piety mingled in her days. And through all she remained very much a Spaniard. A mantilla was her armour, her weapon a fan. When French runners beat Spanish ones in a race, she lost her temper, and began rolling downhill a roadman's heap of stones.

" What are you doing ? " asked a young priest.

" I am demolishing France to avenge the conquest of Spain," she answered.

The young priest had come to her with a sort of recommendation through the Rothschilds. He was one of those priests in whom the feelings of the man were stronger than the vocation of the priest : he could not but admire beauty. He combined an apparently ascetic fervour with an extreme worldliness, and inherited a fortune from the family of Hungarian Jews into which he was born. His name

was Bernard Bauer.¹ Some years later he was to renew his acquaintance with the young lady whom he had found so striking. At the same time Alcanizes was to touch again the life of the woman who had loved him. He was to marry the widow of her husband's illegitimate brother.

¹ Loliée : *Vie de l'Impératrice Eugénie*.

II

THE THRONE

What's in the *Times*?—a scold
 At the emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.
 BROWNING : *A Lover's Quarrel.*

I

WHEN, in 1849, Madame de Montijo took the Countess de Teba back to Paris, their eyes had been turned on to the Prince who had become a President, and who was the cousin of Mathilde. A man of forty, with very short legs and a large head, inclined generally to one side, a curious little pointed beard, small pale blue eyes which struck Gladstone's daughter as having a foxy look in them,¹ a large hooked nose, hard angular cheeks shaved to the neck, which was thick, like his nose and the lower part of his head beneath the crown, a thick moustache waxed to a point, and generally a look of weariness on his rather gross face. He was indeed a figure to invite long question and long attention. He mingled strange attributes, for, in spite of his appearance, he gave an impression of extreme goodness of heart, and had a power of winning love and confidence, not least from women. His life was a curious story.

¹ Lucy Masterman : *Mary Drew.*

2

His mother, Hortense de Beauharnais, a daughter of the Empress Josephine, had married the younger brother of the great Napoleon in 1802. Louis Bonaparte had not desired it: he was interested in another: but Napoleon and Josephine were relentless, and bore him down. "*Une attaque aussi vive qu'inattendue lui arracha son consentement*" (5)—such were Napoleon's words as to the result of his own shock action.¹ Louis and Hortense were sent to the throne of Holland. A son was born in 1802, another in 1804, and this, the third, in 1808. But both husband and wife had sought distractions elsewhere, and it was long questioned whether the third son of Hortense was also her husband's. He never had a likeness to the Bonapartes, and it was remembered that some months before his birth his mother had been very often in the company of Admiral Verheuil. There was much to be said on both sides, but the general impression was that the Bonapartes had proof that he was not one of them, and Lord Cowley referred to a letter from Napoleon I to Louis Bonaparte in support of this. "*Votre femme vient d'accoucher,*" it was said to run: "*pas de bruit ni de scandale qui ne retomberait que sur vous et sur moi! Restez tranquille, et je prends l'engagement avec vous c'est la dernière fois que je vous demanderais de reconnaître ce qui ne vous appartient pas.*"² (6)

3

But Napoleon himself, in robbing Holland of independence, forced Louis down from the throne again

¹ P. Guedalla: *The Second Empire*.

² *The Paris Embassy*, p. 208.

before the baby was two years old. So that not only was it doubted whether he was a Bonaparte, but his mother had ceased to reign, and his grandmother had ceased to be an Empress.

The little Prince visited Malmaison as well as the Tuileries. His mother found consolation in the absence of her husband, and it was then that the Comte de Flahault became the father of a son who was known later as the Duc de Morny. While his uncle was at Elba, the Prince had remained at Malmaison.

In 1815 Napoleon had returned, and Louis was taken with his brother to visit the returned Emperor at the Elysée and the Tuileries. The two little boys saw him again, after a few days, in postures of dismay, and then they were taken with their brother to Aix-les-Bains. The brother was claimed by his father and went to Florence where, some years later, he died, and Louis found a home with Queen Hortense, first at Constance, then at Baden, then at Munich. He went to school at Augsburg. In fact, he learnt in his long years in that gymnasium to speak German so well that a flavour of it got into the accent of his French. Meanwhile his mother settled in a Schloss on the shores of Lake Constance at Arenenberg, and Louis learned to shoot, to swim, and still more to make love. He rode and drove well, and in fact took up with ease the rôle of a young country gentleman. In 1836, when Louis Philippe gave back order to a Paris in revolution, Louis Bonaparte was learning gunnery at Thun.

In the autumn of that year he visited his father and his elder brother at Florence. There he and his brother engaged in anti-papal agitation, and it was rumoured that they had joined the Carbonari, to whom, it appears, they bound themselves by vows

to unify Italy and overthrow the Pope. The views of Mazzini's political idealism certainly touched them. Hortense realised that they were in danger, and after twenty years of absence she, to reclaim them, went back to her husband in his palace in Florence. She succeeded, and a year later she and her son Louis were in London.

On their way home they passed the stately trees which hide Malmaison from the road, and in the church at Rueil they visited the tomb of Josephine. The young man who had been a Carbonaro was deeply impressed, and he returned to Arenenberg as a lover of the Imperial tradition, with a new faith in his dynasty. A year later both his own elder brother and his cousin, the Duke of Reichstadt, were dead. Louis Napoleon, at the age of twenty-four, became the heir of the Bonapartes.¹

In 1836 he decided, with Colonel Vaudrey, to make an appeal to the French Army. One autumn evening he spoke to a group of some twenty officers in Strassburg and found them enthusiastic. On October 28 he drove into Strasbourg, and gathered a company around him. The artillery was with him, but the infantry took another tone. The attempt broke down, and the Prince was driven to Paris in a post-chaise. As he made his way into the Conciergerie two little Spanish girls who were friends of Madame Delessert, wife of the Governor of the prison, were called by her to look at the guarded Prince. They were Paca and Eugenia de Guzman, who never forgot this dramatic sight of the nephew of the great man for whom their father had fought, and of whom they were hearing so much just then from M. Beyle.²

¹ Guedalla : *The Second Empire*.

² Filon, *op. cit.*

4

The decision of Louis Philippe was that Louis Napoleon should be sent, not to St. Helena, but to New York, which was reached by way of the Canaries, Rio de Janeiro, and Baltimore.

He did not stay long in New York, for in June of 1837, as he was driving round with a clergyman, he had news that his mother was to undergo an operation. He took the first packet to Liverpool, and reached Arenenberg by way of the Rhine. His mother died in October.

In the late autumn of 1838 he set himself up in London, and before long had a house in Carlton House Terrace. The Imperial Eagle was painted on his carriage, and in days when the Queen rode out daily with her Court, the Prince too would ride in the Park. He was joined by M. de Montholon, who twenty years before had been with Napoleon at St. Helena.

Meanwhile he was maturing plans for another attempt to oust Louis Philippe, and in 1840 he crossed to Boulogne, and attempted to summon the garrisons to his side. But his attempt was an even greater failure than before. In a short time he was left alone with his eagle on a hill behind the town, and finally took to boats, while the King's soldiers hotly pursued. They fired and sank the boats, and Prince Louis was rescued rather than captured. He was again taken to Paris and tried, and this time condemned to imprisonment for life. The place chosen was the fortress of Ham in Picardy, and he passed six years in it.

Those six years, from thirty-two to thirty-eight, at once formed his mind and destroyed his character. In the long monotony he had time to think out his

politics and his ways : but he developed the habit of conceiving ideas which he did not need to bring into contact with the world. And the life of inaction deadened him. He had always been taciturn, but from now on he became more so. He took a little exercise in the courtyard, and played cribbage with his faithful companions, Montholon and Conneau. But he did more. He made Ham into his university, and for six years he read and wrote systematically. His dying father asked to see him, but the Royal Government refused to let him move.

5

When Louis Napoleon was still at Ham a certain Mrs. Gordon, who had been the mistress of Colonel Vaudrey at the time of the Strassburg attempt, came to Paris, met the Montijos, and sang to them. The Montijos were curious indeed about a lady who had been closely concerned in the Strassburg adventure, the result of which they had seen from the windows of the Conciergerie. Mrs. Gordon was very fond of talking of "mon Prince" and spoke of going to see him at Ham. Doña Eugenia was intensely interested. A conspirator, a prisoner, a prince, a Napoleon—was not this a perfect hero of romance for her? Might she not also go with Mrs. Gordon? The Countess de Montijo agreed, but a revolution broke out in Spain, and the astute mother judged it wiser to return. And there, after her visit to Ham, Mrs. Gordon joined them and reawakened their curiosity.¹

6

As the years went on at Ham, Louis Napoleon grew desperate. At last, on May 6, 1846, he matured

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

a plan of escape. A friend had left a British passport, and his valet smuggled in a mason's clothes. With beard and moustache shaved, a blue blouse on, and rouge on his pale cheeks, he walked slowly out of the prison with a plank on his shoulder, which he held between his face and the sentry. Down the road he was met by a cab, and they drove on to St. Quentin and Valenciennes. The valet was recognised, and an official examined the British passport. But in the afternoon they were over the Belgian frontier, while the faithful Conneau guarded at Ham a bolster in a bed which he said had taken medicine and was awaiting the results.

While King Louis Philippe was plotting with Guizot for the marriage of the Queen of Spain, the Prince took his old place in London society. He met Lord Malmesbury in Jermyn Street. He dined with the brilliant Lady Blessington, whose wit enabled her to keep a salon when beauty and the tide of fortune receded. A moustache soon grew over the thick mouth, and though he failed to get a passport to visit King Louis in Florence before the old man died, he had a not unpleasant time in London. He made everywhere a quite favourable impression. Cobden expressed a general feeling when he put him down as "evidently a weak fellow, but mild and amiable."

There were, of course, ladies other than Lady Blessington who were interested in him. He himself proposed to marry Miss Emily Rowles, whose parents' house at Chislehurst, Camden Place, he secured for himself to live in, long years after. But Miss Rowles refused him, for he already maintained a house for another lady in Berkeley Street—Miss Howard.

Before he had been back two years in London the Government of Louis Philippe had collapsed. Once again Louis Napoleon entered France. But hearing

that the new Government was not yet ready for him, he returned to England and waited in King Street while the Bourbon family settled at Claremont. He was sworn in as a special constable against the Chartists, and carried a truncheon in Piccadilly.¹ But, in June 1848, a Bonapartist feeling had been worked up, and he was elected a deputy for Paris. In December the feeling had grown so strong that he was elected President. About that time Madame de Montijo brought her dazzling daughter back to Paris.

7

Soon after the Prince was elected President his cousin, Count Bacciochi, presented to him the Countess of Montijo and her daughter, whom he had noticed in the salon of Princess Mathilde. Doña Eugenia spoke daringly: "Monseigneur, we have often spoken about you with a lady who is passionately devoted to your interests."

The President asked her name. Doña Eugenia answered, "Mrs. Gordon." His eyes searched her. How much did she know? He could not tell. He saw that she was full of interest in him: he felt also a very strong attraction. Might not the friend of Mrs. Gordon do what Mrs. Gordon had done? A little later he sent through Bacciochi an invitation to the ladies to dine at St. Cloud. When they arrived at the Palace they found a carriage waiting to drive them to Combleval, a little house deep in the woods towards Villeneuve. When they arrived there, they found no one but Bacciochi and the President himself.

They dined well; and as they finished their dinner the Prince, proposing a walk in the park,

¹ P. Guedalla, *op. cit.*

rose, and offered his arm to Doña Eugenia, while Bacciochi approached her mother. There can be little doubt that the two men had contemplated taking different directions. But Eugenia de Guzman, stepping aside, said :

“ Monseigneur, my mother is here.”

The Prince silently took the mother's arm, and walked gloomily off. “ I don't think he enjoyed that evening,” the lady said long years afterwards.¹

When they came back to Paris, however, the Duchess of Alba warned them that they had made a fatal mistake. And it was thought better that they should leave Paris. They made an excursion to the Rhineland, and the Prince-President found consolation with Miss Howard.

8

For four years the President became increasingly popular, and his power became more and more decided. He was recognised as the safeguard of property and the guarantee of peaceful order. Would it not perhaps be better, he asked, if his position was fixed by the inheritance of the title of Emperor ?

When the Prince-President made this suggestion, the young Spanish lady, who was an old admirer of his family, who had been his guest at Combleval, and who sixteen years before had watched him being driven as a prisoner into the Conciergerie, was moved to enthusiasm. She offered to assist him with all that she possessed. But the offer was unnecessary. France was in a state of growing enthusiasm. Paris began to give Imperial dignities to the Prince-President. They began to speak of him as His Highness. Imperialist petitions were being signed

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

in the provinces. At Bourges they greeted him with the cry of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" Through Lyons, Arles, Marseilles to Montpellier, and across to Bordeaux, enthusiasm spread as he toured on. Some, it is true, feared, in a doubting mood, that a return to the Napoleonic Empire would mean a return to Napoleonic Wars. But that was not the idea of the Prince-President. "As for me," he said in a sentence that was never forgotten, "I say the Empire means peace."

The Senate then petitioned that he should be made Emperor, and a referendum was submitted to the people. Their choice was clear. On November 21, 1852, 7,824,189 votes against 253,145 made him Emperor of the French.

9

No sooner was Napoleon elected Emperor than he became preoccupied with the idea of marriage. In fact, his counsellors insisted on it. They must have a guarantee of stability. Of course he still had his affection for Miss Howard, whom he had installed a few steps from the Tuileries. But pleasing and faithful as she was, it was obviously quite unthinkable that a woman of her origin, her antecedents, and her equivocal position at that moment, should be made Empress of the French. The new Emperor sought to consolidate his position with a suitable Princess. There was his cousin, Princess Mathilde, to whom he had proposed sixteen years before, and who had since married Count Demidoff, whom Longfellow was taken to see in Florence. But the Vatican would not dissolve her marriage. There was the widow Queen of Portugal. There was a Princess of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. There was in Germany a daughter

of the disinherited King of Sweden, the Princess Vasa, who afterwards became the Queen of Saxony. There was, above all, Princess Adelaide of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, a niece of Queen Victoria, her mother being a daughter of the Duchess of Kent by her first marriage. Such a relationship might mean an alliance, and the English Court was impressed. It would mean a change of religion : it would mean marriage to a man who, it was well known, had never attempted to lead a life of chastity. Moreover, the throne was dangerous, and since the Princess herself, according to Greville, was most eager for the match, it was Victoria who prevented it. Lord Cowley, wrote Greville, thought that the Queen was wrong.

But while this negotiation was being pressed, the Emperor found himself fascinated by Mlle de Montijo. Close observers, both at Compiègne and at Fontainebleau, were convinced that Napoleon was in love. Her mother too, as Lord Cowley noted, was with her and playing a bold game. The daughter seemed determined. "She has a bad cold," wrote Castellane in his journal, "but she is none the less decided to go to Compiègne, and go she will." Had not the Emperor at Compiègne, when she admired a clover leaf on which the dew shone glittering, sent Count Bacciochi to Paris to bring back a clover of emeralds and diamonds? ¹ Had he not crowned her with a wreath of violets at a dinner at Compiègne? ² Had he not at Fontainebleau, on the eve of Ste. Eugénie, given her, with a bouquet of flowers, the horse she had ridden so well the day before? Had he not at Compiègne been unable to keep his eyes from her as, in a close-fitting habit, with an ostrich feather in her hat, and a handle of mother-of-pearl to her whip,

¹ M. de Maupas : *Mémoires*, ii. 16.

² Castellane : *Journal*.

and spurs on her tiny feet, she rode astride upon the thoroughbred he had given her? Lord Cowley had been present and noted it all. "The Emperor," he said, "is going it finely with the young Montijo."¹

What would it mean? The Ambassador hoped to link the new Emperor with his own country. He had been in close negotiation with the Emperor's illegitimate cousin, Count Walewski, who had been appointed French Ambassador in London, and who had urged the marriage with the Queen's niece. Cowley interviewed Walewski. He asked him to stop the demonstrations going on between the Emperor and the lovely Spaniard, whom a skilful modesty made more alluring. Did the Emperor hope to repeat the episode of St. Cloud? If so, it was understood that she had made it clear he could not get to her bedroom except through the chapel. "She has played her game so well," wrote Lord Cowley, "that he can get her in no other way but marriage." Meantime Walewski pointed out to Napoleon that the chances with Princess Adelaide were favourable and that she might accept at any moment. But Napoleon refused to pay less attention to the woman he now adored. His Foreign Minister, who in November had warned him of the danger, was now told that he had known the Emperor's mind better than His Majesty himself, who indeed was far from disappointed when, on January 2, the decision made by or for Princess Adelaide was to decline.

Napoleon was now free, and acted with great rapidity. He saw the Guzmans frequently. The Countess de Montijo had hardly allowed her daughter, even in her bedroom, to be out of sight. The Countess knew that Eugénie could hold her own with men, but she knew the habits of the Emperor and

¹ *The Paris Embassy*, edited by Col. the Hon. F. Wellesley.

decided to run no risks. Either she or her brother-in-law, the Count de Galve, was always at hand to see that while the Emperor attempted to compromise her, her virtue should remain unassailable. When the Emperor made his irregular proposals to her, Eugénie sought counsel of an old friend. "*Ma petite*," was the answer, "*il vaut mieux avoir des remords que des regrets*." (7) The young lady, however, came to another conclusion, and was able to say when she married that she did so without either.¹ If he wished to possess her, he now knew, he must make her Empress of the French. She would not enter into rivalry with Miss Howard or contemplate the relation which was known by the euphemism of morganatic marriage.²

On New Year's Eve the Countess and her daughter, with the Emperor, were entertained by Princess Mathilde, where at midnight the hostess invited the men to kiss the brow of the ladies present. Doña Eugenia, however, refused, in the face of a playful outcry against her prudery. She said that she preferred to keep to the ways of her own country. In Spain men might call women by their Christian names, which would suggest scandalous intimacy in France, and even in her case did suggest it. But in no circumstance could they kiss them.³

In both her strictness and her ease her standards were simply Spanish. The French, accustomed as they were to artificial graces and studied bearing, could easily be led astray by the friendly manner, the coquettish naturalness, seeming almost like abandon,

¹ *Le Correspondant*, 1928, p. 698. Legge: *Comedy and Tragedy of the Second Empire*, p. 40.

² Primoli: "Autour de Mariage" (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1, 1924).

³ *The Times*, Jan. 22, 1853.

which were the grace of a lady of Spain.¹ Doña Eugenia often surprised a stranger by the frankness of her approaches. But those who knew her country knew that this meant no inclination towards relaxed morals ; and at times, even to old age, she would assert uncompromisingly the strictest standards of her country. It was to these that Louis Napoleon had now to adapt himself.

On New Year's Day, 1852, the new Emperor gave his first official reception, and the Countess de Montijo brought her daughter, who, since her visit to Fontainebleau and Compiègne, was a name to draw every eye in Paris. They saw a Spaniard with remarkable blue eyes and red-gold hair, a charming complexion, and fine and regular features. She was not one of the voluptuous and striking women who turn the heads of multitudes of men. What marked her features was their elegance and grace.² The habits of the Emperor were well known, and the coquetries of Doña Eugenia were as striking as they were successful. Few reputations could in such circumstances have escaped the slings and arrows of gossip. As the young Countess went in to supper, a certain Madame de Fortoul pushed past, saying in a loud voice that she was astonished that a questionable foreigner should presume to take precedence of her.

The Countess de Teba turned pale, but she restrained herself, and drew back with the word "*Passez, Madame.*"

Though she and her mother had been commanded to sit at the Emperor's own table, her temper was not calmed. The Emperor rose and standing beside her chair asked what had disturbed her. All eyes were turned towards them. And Doña Eugenia simply asked him to take his place.

¹ Primoli, *op. cit.*

² *Indépendance Belge*, Jan. 20, 1853.

After the supper, however, he asked again.

"I will know the truth. What has happened to you?"

"Sire, I have been insulted, but I shall not be insulted a second time."

"To-morrow no one shall dare to insult you."¹

It was not until January 15, however, that a formal proposal of marriage was presented to Madame de Montijo, who by that time had been preparing to leave for Italy. The minute it was rumoured that the Emperor had been induced to sign it, the Conde de Galve was at hand to take it to the Place Vendôme. This was its tenor :

"MADAME LA COMTESSE,—

"Il y a longtemps que j'ai aimé Mlle votre fille et que j'ai désiré en faire ma femme. Je viens donc aujourd'hui vous demander sa main, car personne plus qu'elle n'est capable de faire mon bonheur, ni plus digne de porter une couronne. Je vous prierai si vous y consentez de ne pas ébruiter ce projet avant que nous ayons pris nos arrangements.

"Recevez, Madame, l'assurance de mes sentiments de sincère amitié.

"NAPOLÉON."² (8)

Resolution and contrivance had at last succeeded. The Spanish ladies had omitted nothing. With a daring that might have ruined a daughter of softer stuff, and which had startled her family, the Countess of Montijo, aided by the Count de Galve, had consummated the career to which her striking talents

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*. Count Primoli, whose details are not always accurate, gives a different version of this story (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1924). Cf. Hübner : *Neuf Ans*.

² Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

had led her. A message of uncertainty—in the words of fidelity—could now be sent, and was sent, to Alcanizes. The telegram was intercepted and brought to the Emperor. But its contents had no news for him. “*Nous sommes déjà d'accord sur sujet,*” he said.

Alcanizes replied with congratulations.¹

10

Eugenia poured out her heart in a long letter to her sister, which began in French but soon broke into Spanish.

“*MA CHÈRE ET BONNE SŒUR* (it commenced) —

“I want to be the first to tell you of my marriage with the Emperor. He has been so noble, so generous with me. He has shown me so much love that I am still quite overcome. He has struggled with the ministers and conquered them—that I know—and on February 15 he announces it to the House in the speech from the throne, and the wedding is fixed for the 1st of March. He has said to me that he would be delighted if you should come, and if you can't now, since the time is so short in between, you mustn't fail to come in May for the celebrations.² I can't tell you, my sister, for me you have always been one of those for whom I cared the most. The fate which joined us in our childhood has separated us. But I hope that you will come sometimes to see how much I love you, for my love will be always firm and true. I ask the same of you, and if sometimes a hostile fate

¹ Letters in the possession of the Marques de Arcicollar, and Primoli (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1, 1924).

² She meant the coronation that was being contemplated.

pursues us we will turn our eyes to you. I beg you to say nothing for the present, for anonymous letters and things to bother me would shower down, which you don't at all want. A kiss for Carlos, and for dear Maria. Tell them that I keep my collar of pearls for the first ball I go to.—Your loving sister,

“EUGENIA.”¹

There followed a very precise direction for two fans of the best taste which could be found, set in silver filigree or gold, and for two new ball dresses. She could be sure that if they were her sister's choice they would be of the prettiest. She sent a cloak for her sister's festa which she hoped she would like, and finished her letter by saying her time was very full : so good-bye.

II

She was indeed “*une lionne à tous crins*,” but the fulfilment of her fate was to make its highest demands on her courage. Napoleon did not disguise it from her that in taking leave of the retirement of private life, of the intimacies of earlier years, and of irresponsible amusement, she was facing the risk of reigning over a people which had more than once persecuted to exile or to death those who, like herself, had all the claims that beauty, high birth, and a brave spirit could give. It was known that he had spoken to her frankly. The Countess de Montijo, so Greville said, wrote it to the Marchioness de Santa Cruz, and the King of the Belgians wrote it to Victoria.²

When Napoleon made her the definite proposal that she should reign with him, she answered in

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

² *Greville Memoirs. Queen Victoria's Letters*, 1st series.

becoming terms of the position to which he desired to raise her. He spoke, however, very plainly, of all the danger surrounding him. He was unpopular with the old nobility, and though the masses acclaimed him, they might change their mood. He mentioned disaffection in the army, through which he had in former years been twice arrested. He knew, however, that a war would change that, though a war was the last thing he could wish ; and he spoke to her also of the fact that the Great Powers, especially the Czar, were ill disposed to him. The skilled diplomatist, who had had so much to do with women, knew that to be honest was to be winning. Before the prospect that he opened the spirit of Eugenia's courage rose to more generous warmth.¹

No sooner had Napoleon and Eugenia finally decided than their courage was put to one of its severest tests. Miss Howard, not unnaturally, made terrible scenes. Others, for different reasons from hers, as Madame Stephanie Tascher de la Pagerie quaintly notes, were also displeased. His family, his ministers, his country were all indignant. King Jérôme simply refused to believe in such abysmal folly. Much worse, Princess Mathilde fell on her knees to beg him to desist.²

12

In Princess Mathilde Bonaparte, the daughter of Jérôme, Doña Eugenia found herself at issue with one of the most remarkable women in Europe, and one whom, as we saw, Louis Napoleon had much wanted to marry. In her the blood of the Stuarts mixed with that of the Bonapartes. She was the

¹ Pierre de la Gorce : *Histoire du 2de Empire*, i. 124.

² Tascher : *Mon Séjour*.

niece of both the great Napoleon and also of the reigning Czar. When the Prince-President attained his triumph, a third Emperor was her cousin.

Her marriage with Count Demidoff was a failure, but it secured her a large income. Unable to obtain the annulment of her marriage, she could exert only indirectly her former hold upon the new Emperor's heart. At a critical moment in 1848 she had pledged her jewels for him : during the years of the Presidency she was not only the first lady at the Elysée, but her own salon was the antechamber of what was growing to be the Court. Her appearance was as striking as the force of her wit : her finely shaped hands and superb bearing, her rich fair hair, which Eugénie called Venetian, her shoulders, which were like a piece of sculpture, her handsome Napoleonic features that made her profile like a Roman medallion, and, above all, the sensitive expression in her clear brown eyes, would have made her a woman to admire anywhere, even had they not been supported either by Bonaparte prestige, by brilliant connections, or a generous warmth of mind and feeling which made her kind and witty to the verge of freedom. "You will wall me in like a Vestal Virgin," she said to Haussman, *à propos* of the view from her garden being spoilt. "*Tranquillisez vous, Madame,*" he answered most respectfully, "no one would do that injury to Your Highness."¹ She was a liberal not only on political questions, but on religious ones too, and even on moral ones. Her ways, her charm, her speech, Eugénie herself said long after, everything about her was redolent of grace and wit, independence and frankness, ardour and health.²

From her the Emperor would take any remark,

¹ F. Bac : *La Princesse Mathilde*.

² Paléologue : *Entretiens avec l'Impératrice*.

any piece of fun, or any scolding. And when she attacked him, it was with a spiced freedom of speech and a bluff heartiness that sounded like a servant speaking in a play of Molière's. She attacked him fiercely now. While she and the Bonapartes were furious, Napoleon's other adherents were dismayed. Count Tascher de la Pagerie, when told by his cousin he was to be in charge of the household of the new Empress, begged leave to retire to Germany. Up to the very moment that the engagement was announced, Drouyn de Lhuys, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, made a strong remonstrance; and, not less sinister, there was a feeling of elation in the Faubourg St. Germain. Finally, the announcement caused a sharp fall on the Bourse.¹

13

The Countess de Teba felt the strain. And the Austrian Ambassador, meeting her on January 14 dining with M. Gudin, noticed that, in spite of her extraordinary beauty, she looked pale and tired. The extreme tension of her nerves was evident. But when the Ambassador spoke to her, he found her as attractive as ever.²

The Emperor faced the deputies on January 22 and made a dramatic speech in the Tuileries to deputations of the Senate, the Legislative Assembly, the Council of State, and in fact all the highest dignitaries of the Empire. Not in accordance with the political traditions of old, he said, in a voice which had not yet lost its German accent, would his marriage be. He now rejected the sour grapes of royal alliances such as he had been making every

¹ *The Times*, Jan. 21, 1853.

² Hübner: *Neuf Ans.*

effort to negotiate. "They create false security," he said, "and often substitute family interests for those of the nation." Moreover, the people had an idea that what had happened to imported princesses might happen again. If there was one woman who had graced their throne, was she not Josephine? And Josephine was no princess.

As for himself, the new Emperor did not belong to a family which had been royal for generations. They exemplified the principle of a career open to talent. And, he added, aiming at the Czar,¹ it was glorious to be a parvenu Emperor, if parvenu meant reigning by the free suffrage of a great nation. He had been obliged to abandon precedent. His choice, therefore, was to be freely his own. "She whom I have chosen," he continued, "is of exalted birth, French by education; and by the memory of the blood of her father shed in the cause of the Empire, she has the advantage, as a Spaniard, of having no family in France to whom honours and dignities must be given. Endowed with every intellectual quality, she will be an ornament to the throne, and in the hour of danger one of its bravest defenders. A devout Catholic, she will address her prayers with mine to Heaven for the welfare of France. Gracious and good, she will, I firmly hope, exhibit in the same position the virtues of the Empress Josephine."

The great audience gave respectful applause, but they were not satisfied. They had hoped to see their Emperor allying himself to a great family: they did not want to think that he was in any way a parvenu; and they remembered some gossip about Josephine. But the Emperor's chief appeal was to the finality of his own choice. When they learned to know her, they would be convinced that once more he had

¹ F. A. Simpson: *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France*.

been inspired by Providence. "I have preferred a woman whom I love and respect to an unknown one, an alliance with whom might with its advantages have brought the necessity for sacrifices. Without disrespect to any one, I yield to my inclinations."

There were few who really agreed. But there were some who thought of the alternative : for Miss Howard was always at hand, "the terror of those who love him," as Madame de Contades wrote, and it needed something to make him marry at all. If Lord Cowley felt misgivings, they were not felt by Lord Palmerston. "He had no chance of a political alliance of any value," wrote Lord Palmerston, "or of sufficient importance to counterbalance the annoyance of an ugly or epileptic wife whom he had never seen till she was presented to him as a bride."

When the approaching marriage was announced to the various prefectures, Napoleon's speech was sent with it. And the wisdom of this plan was soon made manifest, for the first news that the fiancée was not of royal blood everywhere awoke astonishment. The middle classes did not know quite what to make of it, but they were won over by the argument of the proclamation ; the Royalists derided it, and continued to deride ; but, except at Marseilles, where a subversive element was opposed to anything savouring of monarchy, the lower classes were delighted. Noble families, if well disposed, were satisfied that she was noble ; and the peasantry were content that she was not royal. The conviction spread, especially in the Vosges, that she would be a patroness of charity ; and in the Basses Pyrénées, where from her stays at Eaux Bonnes and Biarritz she was already known, there was a personal satisfaction.¹

The Countess de Teba by dramatic acts of charity

¹ Archives Nationales, F.1c. 108.

had already been attracting notice in Paris. She poured her purse into the lap of a poor woman shivering with two half-naked children on her knee, and then covered her with her own padded cloak. Another time she rushed to a workman who had fallen from a scaffold in the Rue de Rivoli, assured herself that he was not seriously hurt, and thrust into his hand something towards supporting him till he had recovered.

The bluntness of Palmerston was kindness compared to the acrid tone in which *The Times* gave its acceptance to the marriage: "He has nothing to expect from the goodwill or the respect of society, for he never enjoyed them. He has nothing to gain from a nearer personal alliance with the Courts of Europe, for he does not belong to them, and they cannot trust him. But he is the ruler of France, invested with absolute power, and we heartily wish that he had never used it to any worse purpose than to marry a woman whom he likes."¹

14

Napoleon had judged it discreet to act more quickly than he had at first proposed. Instead of leaving the announcement till the middle of February, as he had intended, he had made it on January 22, and the marriage had been arranged for a week later. Doña Eugenia had been swept away on the great tide of events. On the day of the announcement she and her mother had been moved from her apartment in the Place Vendôme to the Elysée: from the Elysée she was in no more than a few days to mount to the most splendid and fateful of thrones. The loneliness and the drama of the central life she

¹ Jan. 23, 1853.

was to live now faced her for the first time. Again and yet again she poured out in letters to her sister her sincere and ardent mind.

“MY SISTER (said the first, written on January 22),—

“I arrive this moment at the Elysée. I have not had a moment to tell you of the emotion I feel. All this time is very sad. I say good-bye to my family, to my country, to dedicate myself wholly to the man who has loved me to the point of raising me to his throne. I love him. It is a great guarantee for our happiness. He is noble of heart and devoted. One must know him in his intimate life to know how highly one must think of him. His speech has had a magical effect, because he speaks to the people and the heart, two things on which one never calls in vain in France. To-day I still regard with terror the responsibility which will soon be weighing on me, and yet I am fulfilling my destiny. I tremble not from the fear of assassins but of seeming less in history than Blanche of Castile or Anne of Austria. I am sending you the speech of Louis Napoleon. I am sure it will please you.

“Good-bye. To-day, it was the first time, they cried *Vive l'Impératrice*. God grant that that may never change, but adversity will find me firmer and more courageous than prosperity. Your loving sister,
EUGENIE.”¹

The letter was written and left on her table till she found it a day or two later, and added a postscript in Spanish, saying she hadn't dared to telegraph to the

¹ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

Duke for fear of inconveniencing him, and how much she would miss them on the 30th, when she married. Now her sister was to tell her friends, and to tell a certain Fabian not to forget to send her a wreath to wear—for if she hadn't his, she would wear none.

“DEAR SISTER (so ran her second letter),—

“On the eve of mounting on one of the greatest thrones of Europe, I cannot help feeling a certain terror. The responsibility is immense. Good and evil will be attributed to me. I have never been ambitious, and yet my destiny has drawn me to the top of an incline from which the slightest thing hurls one down; but I am not risen from a place so low as to feel giddy. Two things will protect me, I hope: the faith I have in God, and the immense desire I have to help the wretched classes who are deprived of everything, even the chance to work. If the finger of Providence has marked me a place so high, it is to serve as a mediator between those who suffer and he who can assuage their lot. So I have accepted this great position as a Divine mission, and at the same time I thank God for having placed on my path a heart so noble and so devoted as that of the Emperor. I have suffered much in my life: I had almost ceased to believe in happiness, and now again I do believe in it. I was so little used to being loved; my own life was a great desert. I lived in loneliness, and when perchance weary of that life, I sought an affection of some sort, I was loved only spasmodically; and when it was over I was simply tired. This man has an irresistible strength of will, without being obstinate: capable of sacrifices the greatest and the smallest: he

would go into the woods to gather a flower on a winter night, tearing himself from the fire to go and get wet through, to satisfy a woman's whim. The day after he will risk his crown rather than not share it with me. He counts the cost of nothing. He keeps risking his future on a throw, and that is why he always wins.

"I remember now that when Pepa was saying to me one day, when they were talking politics, 'Woman's business is to knit stockings,' I knew well that it was not my destiny : I felt within me another career. I have the conviction that I can be useful to my country, even though half French : at present I can never forget the lessons of my childhood, or where they have buried poor father. Soon I shall be alone here without friends : all destinies have their sad side : for example, I who was mad at the very thought of freedom, I chain my life down : never alone, never free, all Court etiquette, of which I shall be the principal victim : but my belief in fatalism is each time more convinced. A very extraordinary thing has happened, which leaves the road open for superstition. When Napoleon married Josephine, one of their friends who was a servant brought back from America a plant called *Pageria* ; that year it flowered, and all these years it never flowered a second time, until this year when it blooms again as if to announce the new era of the Bonapartes. But all I have to say, dear friend, is that the marriage ceremony will take place in great pomp at Notre-Dame, the carriages quite magnificent, and we shall have eight horses. I will tell you, in fact, all the details when it is over : all I can tell you is that my heart beats very high when I

think of the distance I have to cover. But I can have a quiet mind, for it is not likely that there is anything really. And for your peace, I will tell you by telegraph when I am safely arrived at the Tuileries. It is a great sorrow to me not to have had you here on this occasion, but I count definitely on you for May to see the Coronation. It is affairs of state which have pushed my marriage forward by a whole month, and that is what prevents me from making sure of you.

“Good-bye, my dear, loving sister; it is probably the last time that I shall write you before the 30th, for I am so busy that I am obliged to go short of sleep to find the time for writing.

“Good-bye. Do come and see me.—Your loving sister,
EUGÉNIE.”¹

15

The heart and mind so clearly mirrored in this letter were those not only of a woman who was simple and good and courageous: she was able, she was acceptable to the Church party, she had had a Court training, she bore an ancient name, and she had a fine distinction. These overbalanced the facts that she was not a royalty, and that she had a designing mother.

There was, indeed, much to say for the Napoleonic principle which reserved the prizes of life for splendid personalities, and which found little value in a heredity except the gifts which it finally produced. It had been said of Marie Antoinette, whose fate had fascinated Eugénie, that she glittered like the morning

¹ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

star, full of life and splendour and joy. It was far truer of the present Emperor's choice. And among the descendants of the families who had failed to save Marie Antoinette, no sword leapt from its scabbard to avenge for Eugénie the words of dishonour which were spread about her by foul and envying slander¹ or by the contemptible exigencies of Bourbon intrigue, and sometimes by the excessive shrewdness of men and women of the world. The worst that could be brought against her was that she had vanquished the stratagems of her lover, in whom, it was said, *la passion de l'Empire vient de faire place à l'Empire de la passion*.¹ (9)

It was the fiancée who was the first to wish that the Pope should come from Rome to give them their marriage blessing; and a hurried embassy carried the request to the Vatican. But it was remembered that the bridegroom had been a Carbonaro, and there had hardly been time to forget the reception of Pius VII at Fontainebleau. The invitation was too hazardous to accept. "Touched by the honour," Pio Nono declined it "on account of his great age and his infirmities"—though another twenty-five years were to pass before either overwhelmed him.

But the Countess de Teba was too busy to feel disappointed. The preparations for one of the most splendid ceremonies were being crowded into eight days, which passed with a giddy swiftness. While Napoleon was busy in arranging the etiquette of two imposing ceremonials, Doña Eugenia had also to learn her part, and to prepare her trousseau. And in the middle of the week she had news that an old aunt had died in Paris. The poor old creature could hardly have chosen a less convenient moment for her passage to Paradise: or was it to Purgatory?

¹ *The Times*, Jan. 24, 1853.

It was obviously impossible for them to go into mourning, and after some hesitation they decided that for the time at least the decease must be ignored.

Something very much more important had to be decided. The city of Paris had presented her with six hundred thousand francs to buy a necklace of diamonds. Napoleon, never unconscious of possible cataclysms, told her that in such a form it could easily be carried away; but though he argued with her, she insisted that it was better not to accept it. "Touched to hear of the generous decision of the city council," she could not but feel troubled at expense being incurred on her behalf. Would they forgive her declining? Flattered as she was by their homage, they would make her happier in spending the sum in charity. "My desire is that my marriage should be no occasion of new expense to the country to which I shall henceforth belong: my only ambition is to share with the Emperor the love and esteem of the French people."

The expense, in fact, was to be considerable enough: for Napoleon spared nothing to make the occasion splendid. Meanwhile, though their Spanish relatives were doubtful if a Bonaparte marriage was not a *mésalliance*, the Spanish ladies must face the other attack—the claim that they were nobodies. Mérimée hurried to the Offices of Heraldry, which did not fail them. The bride was announced as the daughter of Don Cipriano Guzman y Palafox Fernandez de Cordoba, Layos y la Cerda, Viscount de la Calzada, de Palencia de la Valduerna, Count de Teba, de Baños, de Mora, de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, de Fuentidueña, de Ablitas, de San Esteban de Gormaz y de Casarubios del Monte, Marquis de Moya, de Ardales, de Osera, de Barcarotta, de la Alga, de la Bañeza, de Villanueva del Fresno, de

Valdunquillo, de Mirallo y de Valderrabano, Duke de Peñaranda, and Grand Marshal of Castile.¹

16

And when the Countess de Teba had settled the question of her being a *Grande d'Espagne* of the first class, and had refused the collar of diamonds, there remained another very agreeable task. It was to announce her change in fortune to the Queen of Spain, whose maid of honour she had been, as we saw, six years before. The formalities of this were a happy compromise between the respect of a subject and the expectation of one who was to be something more than an equal.

"I shall have no other thoughts," she said, "than to contribute, in the measure of my powers, to strengthen the bonds which unite the two great nations and two great monarchs to whose service I shall be consecrated by love and duty for ever."

The Queen's answer was an almost greater masterpiece of diplomatic courtesy : "I give my full consent to a union which is so splendid for you, and you may rest assured that I entertain the best wishes for your happiness and that of the Emperor, expressing the hope that both being guided by the hand of the All Powerful, you will lead France, that great nation, to the highest degree of prosperity and strength. In the difficult and dangerous path you are henceforth to lead, always keep for guide faith in the Supreme Being and the duty of sacrificing everything to the Emperor and to France. Such are the sentiments of the Queen, and the counsels of your affectionate Isabella."²

¹ His marquises and dukedom were subordinated, according to the Spanish custom, to the more historic title of Montijo.

² Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

The Queen, being unable to give an example equal to her counsels, was in the course of years to flee for protection to her former subject who, it appeared, had taken them to heart.

17

In the clear but cold night air of January 25, 1853, there was great excitement in the Faubourg St. Honoré when the state carriage, with an escort of mounted carabineers, drove from the Tuileries to the Elysée. It had entered the court and was waiting at the doorway, when the Marquis de Valdegamas, the Spanish Ambassador, and the Duc de Cambacérès, also arrived at the Palace, and greeted the ladies, who were waiting in a salon near the entrance.¹

At 9.15 the bride, wearing a rose-coloured satin gown, a rich garniture of lace, a wreath of jasmine, and a crescent of gold and diamonds, entered the carriage at the Elysée, having her mother on her right. She also wore a necklace of splendid pearls, in which some Spaniards saw an omen, for an old superstition said, "The pearls a bride wears on her wedding day are the tears which she will shed." The Spanish Ambassador and the Duc de Cambacérès sat facing her. Their carriage was preceded by another containing the Princesse d'Essling, the Duchesse de Bassano, and M. Feuillet de Conches, Master of the Ceremonies. With their escort, they drove at a leisurely pace down the Faubourg St. Honoré through a crowd which lined the pavement, or looked down from countless windows on the little procession, giving cheers among which now and again voices of derision, and even hisses, could be heard.²

¹ F. Bac : *Le Mariage de l'Impératrice Eugénie*.

² Hübner : *Neuf Ans*.

They entered the Tuileries by the great entrance at the Pavillon de Flore, and through a serried rank of dignitaries and officers the bride and her mother were led up the great staircase to a salon where Princess Mathilde and Prince Napoleon—who had acquiesced in the inevitable—courteously performed the duty of giving her the first greeting. She was then greeted by her future ladies-in-waiting, and, preceded by Court Chamberlains, an imposing procession made its way to the Salon des Maréchaux.¹

At the end of this great hall, the Emperor, in the uniform of a General Officer, and wearing the Grand Order of the Legion of Honour and the collar of the Golden Fleece which, according to tradition, had been that of Charles V, awaited her. He had wished to come and meet her, but must bow before the exigencies of established ceremonial. As she entered she saw an assemblage so dazzling that for an instant she trembled. She saw the Emperor standing surrounded by Cardinals, by Marshals of France, by Ambassadors—central in a glitter of stars. His features were drawn, and he looked extremely pale. But quickly recovering the instincts of her long Court training, the bride went up to play the central part required of her in the inaugural scene of what was to be the most splendid Court in Europe.² In a few moments she had taken her place on the chair beside the Emperor. A little on the left was placed a book which contained the civil register of the Bonapartes. The first noted the adoption of Prince Eugène Beauharnais as heir to Napoleon I; the last act written in the book recorded the birth of the King of Rome.³

¹ F. Bac, *op. cit.*

² Primoli : *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1, 1924.

³ *The Times*, Jan. 30, 1853.

The Princes of the Bonaparte family placed themselves on the right of the Emperor. Among them was old King Jérôme, the only surviving brother of the victor of Austerlitz. Full of amenity, his kind and almost coquettish eyes, as they shone over the yellow fleshiness of his cheeks, and beneath the wisps of hair that struggled vainly to embrace across his bald crown, told the Spanish Countess that one at least of the Bonaparte family felt benevolent.¹

But though decorum could hardly give way at a Court wedding to a scandal, the fury was not less bitter because it was suppressed. Mathilde had given in, with the warmth of her heart, to the Emperor's claim for loyalty, and what the others said we do not know. We do know what was said by another cousin of the Emperor, the Duchess of Hamilton, who had tried to arrange his marriage with Princess Vasa. It fell to the lot of the Austrian Ambassador to lead this lady on his arm after the civil ceremony, when the assemblage went in twos to bow to the bride and bridegroom. The Ambassador found the Duchess in a violent temper. As they started together, she said: "You will see the scandal I shall make when we get near my cousin." "Have you really made up your mind definitely?" he asked. "Indeed I have." "Then," answered the Ambassador with a bow, and withdrawing his arm, "I beg the Duchess to walk on alone. I shall not follow her."² At this she calmed down, and performed the part required of her. The bride still looked strained: but the Emperor, now in the highest spirits, looked the very picture of human bliss.³

On the left of the bride were Princess Mathilde,

¹ F. Bac: *Le Mariage de l'Impératrice Eugénie*.

² Count Hübner: *Neuf Ans*.

³ F. Bac, *op. cit.*

the Countess de Montijo, and the Spanish Ambassador. The Minister of State approached the throne and said, "*Au nom de l'Empereur.*" Napoleon and the Countess rose. "Sire," he proceeded, "does Your Majesty declare that he takes in marriage Her Excellency Mlle Eugénie de Montijo, Comtesse de Teba, here present?" Napoleon replied, but in so low a tone that those who heard it wondered if he finally hesitated over what he had decided in spite of violent remonstrance. The Minister of State then said, "Mlle Eugénie de Montijo, Comtesse de Teba, does Your Excellency declare that you take His Majesty, Napoleon III, here present, in marriage?" The lady answered with a ringing clearness, accentuated by the roll of the Spanish *r*. And they resumed their seats. A table was brought up bearing the register of the Bonapartes.

"I was standing not far from the spot where Eugénie de Montijo was seated," wrote *The Times* correspondent, "at the moment she was called upon by the great Officer of State to sign the deed which transformed her from a simple Spanish subject into an Empress, and Empress of France. I have seen her also at another royal marriage in which in right of her rank she bore a distinguished part: a part only inferior to the Royal Bride of that day. It was on October 10, 1846, that she followed in attendance on her royal mistress, when the Queen of Spain and her sister Luisa Fernanda were united in marriage in the ancient chapel of the Atocha. The ceremony had been celebrated the night before at the Royal Palace of Madrid, and the next day swept a gorgeous procession along the noblest street the capital of Spain can boast, and the Prado, to the ancient chapel of the Atocha—the first visited by the sovereigns of Spain on their return after a long absence

from Madrid, and the last in which they pay their devotions when leaving it. Little more than six years have gone by since that cortège of nobles, of statesmen, and of warriors passed along. The husband of one of the royal sisters was the present King Consort; of the other, the favourite and not the least deserving son of one of the most powerful sovereigns of Europe. The fair-haired maiden of that day now occupies the throne that the Prince's mother then filled; and the family whose posterity was believed destined to rule France for ever is now in exile! Whether any recollection of the kind passed across the mind of Eugénie de Montijo, as she was summoned to sign her name, I know not, but she appeared agitated, and though her demeanour throughout was of one accustomed to a high station, she trembled for a moment. The Emperor repeated in a gentle and encouraging tone the request made by his Minister, and she took the pen."¹ The trembling girl had but to sign to give her Spanish taste for splendour and her grief of ten years ago their solace and their recompense. Her courage did not fail her now. She rose a moment later Empress of the French.

After this the Imperial bride and bridegroom stood on the dais to receive the homage of the company, who approached in pairs and bowed.

When Court musicians, conducted by Auber, had added their notes to the splendour of the evening's entertainment (the concert seemed hardly begun when it was ended), the new Empress entered her carriage with her mother and drove back to the Elysée to await her religious marriage at Notre-Dame the next morning.² She was now legally the

¹ *The Times*, Jan. 31, 1853.

² F. Bac, *op. cit.*

wife of Cæsar, but the Church had not yet blessed her union with her husband.

Next morning Eugénie found time to write a page to her sister to explain just how she had felt. The ceremony had been magnificent, she wrote; she felt no nervousness till she entered the salon where she had to sign her contract. But what she suffered when she found herself on the throne facing the whole assemblage from a height above them, she could not depict. She had been paler than the jasmine which she wore in her hair—" *depuis hier on m'a donné le titre de majesté, il me semble que nous jouons la comédie.*" (10) Once at a charade she had played being Empress. She did not guess that now it was to be her lot in real life.

" *Adieu, chère sœur,*" she finished; "*mon dernier souvenir de jeune fille est encore pour toi. Je vais m'habiller pour partir. Je t'aime. Toute à toi*

"EUGÉNIE."¹ (11)

18

Paris meanwhile had awakened to a feeling of excitement mingled with cynicism. There were many who felt and were to show indifference, but a taste for gala was one of the things that still made a passionate appeal to the Europe of 1853, and not least to the people of Paris. There were many reasons why at this moment they felt they could enjoy the show. They felt that now, indeed, the Empire did mean peace. Since the election of Napoleon as President, business had been getting steadily better. After the changes and revolutions of fifty years, it looked to them as though they were now to have prosperity under a stable government,

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

and regular business, they hoped, would no longer be interrupted by riots and barricades ; there was a sound anticipation of the sou behind the gaiety with which they unrolled banners and pennants, spread festoons across the street, decorated triumphal arches, or brought their gayest stuffs from their windows to spread colour in the winter morning.¹ In front of the cabarets an invasion of young pines made the city look full of Christmas trees, and flags, varied by chains of gilded paper, made the streets like a *frégate française pavoisée et saluante*.

It was not merely the efforts of a city of enterprise which was beginning to feel itself the centre of the world. Peasants' carts rolled in, drawn by donkeys, and the novelty of railway travel brought in crowds that in the days of the diligence were impossible. But many a little corporation came in with banners and music and took up its place in street or square, and at every turn the Imperial eagle spread its golden wings. Veterans of the great campaigns of the First Emperor were scattered among the crowd and were centres of the sentiment of glory. Now all was to be victory, however, for all was to be peace. The welfare of the people was to be safe under the democratic despotism of the bridegroom and the bride. The Parisian world knew what it meant to be in love, and this city had never been the last to admire a lovely woman. Well, if they saw the beautiful Eugénie, that alone was worth something ; and it was said that her fine features shone from a fair complexion and hair like fine gold. And to these people of reality a wedding was not merely a convention ; it strengthened the power of Eros ; it meant an heir to the dynasty. "*Il leur faut un enfant !*" (12) said the women.²

¹ F. Bac, *op. cit.*

² *Ibid.*

As the morning drew on the streets of the procession grew more splendid with the lines of troops ; in the new and sumptuous full dress of the uniforms, the mounted police and the civic guards, the cuirassiers and carabineers added to the scene a martial thrill, as helmet and cuirass glittered in the sun, or the naked sword flashed a salute in the frosty air.

Such was the scene into which, as the sun bore towards the meridian, the Empress drove, as the centre of it all, from the Elysée down the Faubourg St. Honoré to the Place de la Concorde, to enter the Palace of the Kings of France. As she arrived there at high noon the bells of the whole capital rang out their loudest peals, and through an air vibrant with jubilant sound ringing in the ears of an excitable people the thunder of cannon sounded a salute from the Invalides. Drums, fusilades, trumpets rent the air anew, and the bride found herself led once more by Jérôme and Mathilde to the bridegroom, who, offering his arm, led her to the central balcony to present her to the people of Paris. Then the noise of salutes was drowned in the exultant cry of human voices. Worked to the highest pitch of expectation and excitement, the crowd facing the Tuileries felt a thrill of joy as over the wave of pennants and banners they hailed the beauty of the bride. It was a beauty perfectly suited to such a scene as this. She wore a robe of white satin with a train four yards long ; the corsage was sown with diamonds which glittered in the sun. A famous veil of old lace fell from the diadem she wore—a circlet of diamonds and sapphires—which old King Jérôme had seen on the brow of Josephine on the day of her coronation. The sight of such distinction and such charm in the centre of a magnificent ceremonial produced its inevitable effect. Men who grew old

in the spectacles of Paris said that they had never known a moment of tenses enthusiasm.¹

A few moments later the bride and bridegroom were seated in the Imperial carriage which had led Napoleon and Josephine to their coronation at Notre-Dame, Napoleon and Marie Louise to their wedding there a few years later. But as they drove out of the great gate of the Tuileries into the Rue de Rivoli, the gilt crown which surmounted it was knocked off its pediment, and fell to the frozen ground. Was it mere human inefficiency, or does human inefficiency furnish warnings of fate? The same crown had fallen from the same carriage at the same place when Napoleon drove with Marie Louise to their wedding at Notre-Dame. A footman picked it up and tried to refasten it, but another shock sent it down again.² The delay was slight, but it was significant, nor were bride and bridegroom reassured by their reception from the crowd, which now looked on stupefied and almost hostile. Count Hübner compared it to an audience at a play which they did not understand, and about which they thought it hardly worth while to inquire.

When the procession arrived at Notre-Dame at one o'clock, the bells rang out again, and again the cannon of the Invalides thundered a salute. To the amazement of those in the church, the music was not a wedding march, but the march of the *Prophète*. And not a sound interrupted it. The immense crowd which filled the church remained cold and mute.

¹ M. Fleury : *Memoirs*. F. Bac, *op. cit.* Cf., however, Count Hübner, *Neuf Ans*, and *The Paris Embassy*, which echo the Faubourg St. Germain.

² This incident, though denied by Desmond Mountjoy, who had seen the coach—"any visitor can . . . see, as I did, that there never was an Imperial crown on the top" (*The Melody of God*, p. 80)—has several authoritative witnesses to support it.

Eugénie herself, though she faced the scene with a dignity equal to her rôle, had an air rather of spiritual devotion than of joy. Glancing neither to the right nor to the left, she walked on as pale as death.¹

At the transept the Emperor and Empress were greeted by the Papal Legate and the Cardinals of France, followed by a train of mitred heads, and led to the prie-dieu prepared for them at the entrance to the chancel. Like a sacred object the bride was enveloped in a cloud of incense. With the grace that marked her every movement, and which she had elaborated for this occasion to the perfection of restrained dignity, she knelt on green velvet sown with golden bees to hear the solemn rite which blessed her as a wife, which gave the hallowing of the Church to her contract with her husband, and which brought her face to face with the most solemn mysteries of the Faith.

She was not the first bride, perhaps, to attract more attention than the rites of religion. But the elaborate, and indeed garish, splendour with which the grim old cathedral had been arranged threw the more emphasis on the white figure on which the winter sun, meeting the sapphires of her diadem, shed iridescent fires through medieval glass. As Lady Augusta Bruce looked at her, admiring her graceful carriage, her exquisite figure, her chiselled features and marble complexion, it seemed more than a lovely picture; she looked aerial, ideal, and the whole scene a poet's vision.² Banners alternated with eagles hid the old historic stone which had inspired Victor Hugo, and beneath the coloured glitter of their textures the blazonries of French cities threw out a harder brightness. Of this Eugénie could

¹ Castellane : *Memoirs*.

² *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 1st series.

have been but dimly conscious. She knew only that she was the occasion, and the centre, of a glittering ensemble, in which the taste of the age had done its best to be spectacular. But ancient habit fixed in her mind a very different idea : she never wavered in her faith ; and she had come here to pray and worship and to receive from His appointed ministers a consecration from the Most High.

When, therefore, she arose at the conclusion of the Nuptial Mass she felt a confidence very different from the sense of strain with which she had entered the church. As the assemblage was then impressed by the dignity, now it was by the radiance of her beauty. Nothing ever suited her so well as to be an Empress : and she might well be confident in her triumph. What marked her now was her queenly graciousness. They moved out into the winter air to meet the greetings of the crowd and the auguries of the weather. Groups of village girls greeted them with flowers and congratulations. As they drove on the sun shone on them for a short time, and then was wholly hidden.¹

19

The day of the marriage at Notre-Dame, Napoleon, after his return to the Tuileries, drove his bride out to the Palace at St. Cloud, where he had first planned intimacies with her four years before. But this was winter weather, and the woods were bare. Napoleon's romance was forced to find an environment indoors—and that, perhaps, contented him. His new choice was lovelier than his old ones, and was for the first time his wedded bride. But was she as responsive as Miss Howard, whom he had now made the Comtesse

¹ La Gorce : *Histoire du 2de Empire*, i. 125.

de Beauregard? She could not hold him long. He was at first faithful to her, but after six months he began to say, "I need my little amusements," and he strayed back to old and new loves. The openness of his infidelities was a disturbing factor in the progress of his reign.¹

The Empress, though now a Bonaparte, took more interest in Marie Antoinette than in either of the wives of Napoleon. Her first contact with French royalty had been seven years before, with the Duc de Montpensier. At the beginning of her honeymoon at St. Cloud she asked Napoleon to drive her to Versailles.

Passing beyond the huge bare palace of the *Grand Monarque*, they drove down through the woods to the Petit Trianon, where it had pleased Marie Antoinette to imagine herself a milkmaid. In later years Eugénie made a collection of relics of the tragic queen, and when she returned to Paris visited the Archives Nationales to see the letter Marie Antoinette had written in the Conciergerie before she was driven in the tumbril to the guillotine. At St. Cloud she inhabited the suite of Marie Antoinette, keeping even her portrait and her furniture. The young Empress even made a smaller model of the Trianons in the park. The British Ambassador, seeing the radiant bride so much occupied with the relics of a predecessor who had been beheaded, felt a presentiment of tragedy.²

20

Eugénie was well aware that she must conquer through diplomacy every step of her way. She had been hooted as she drove from the Tuileries to the

¹ F. A. Simpson: *Louis Napoleon and the Recovery of France*.

² *The Paris Embassy*, edited by Hon. F. Wellesley.

Elysée on the evening of her civil marriage, and as she drove from Notre-Dame the reception had been rather cold. She had the five supports of courage, of readiness of wit, of a disposition towards charity, of a taste for splendour, and of personal charm. But these were all secondary to the greater force in the energy and elevation of her character. Seldom indeed did she fail in a direct encounter with men. M. Drouyn de Lhuys, for example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had so resolutely opposed her marriage that when he saw the decision was definite, he felt he had no choice but to resign. Before doing so, he paid a visit of formality to the Countess de Teba. "You will allow me to thank you, Monsieur, and most sincerely, for the advice you gave the Emperor with regard to my marriage. It is exactly the same as I gave him myself."

"I see that the Emperor has given me away," said the Minister, in great embarrassment.

"No," answered the beautiful woman; "honestly to recognise your sincerity, and to tell me the opinion of a devoted servant who told him what he really thought, was no giving away. I told the Emperor myself, just as you did, that he must think of the interests of his throne. But it is not for me to judge whether he is right or wrong in deciding that his interests and his feelings may run together."

The Minister continued in another tone. He left the house with a changed mind about the Emperor's decision—and he did not resign.

When the gorgeous ceremony was over, and the bride and bridegroom had driven away, there was one person who had to face an abrupt change. It



*[From the miniature by Pommagrac
in the Duke of Alba's collection]*

THE COUNTESS OF MONTIJO

was the Countess de Montijo. She found that she had not even a meal ordered, and her thoughts perhaps wandered back from the brilliant ceremonial of Notre-Dame to the house of mourning, where her dead and despised sister lay. Count Hübner saw her driving to St. Cloud in the afternoon.¹ "*Le matin*," he wrote, "*elle était tirée à quatre épingles—et le soir—à cinq clous*." (13) The nails were already in the coffin not of her body but of her brilliance. At the return of the Court she tried to assert herself, but in vain. "I have two incurable defects which will soon be discovered," she had confessed even before the marriage: "I am a foreigner and a mother-in-law."² It was thought, indeed, by some that her men friends were an even greater one. The Emperor had made up his mind, and with the resolution with which he had possessed himself of the daughter, he rid himself of the mother. A few months saw her forced to leave Paris. Considerable sums remitted to her from Paris to Madrid through three different bankers hinted that she had got what terms she could.³ She started off for Madrid, and the faithful Mérimée accompanied her as far as Tours. In letters she wrote to him, some stinging epigrams showed that she had no enthusiasm for her new son-in-law. Her letters contain many references to a Monsieur Isidore or Don Luis. But Mérimée reminded her of her success in her central rôle, for she was the greatest match-maker of her age. And as such she continued busy to the end. And she was not long back in Madrid before Lord Clarendon, signing himself "Yours as always and for ever," advised her she was better out of France.³ She resumed her old life, and found herself, as the mother of a great sovereign,

¹ Hübner : *Neuf Ans*.

² *The Paris Embassy*.

³ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

the possessor of a new prestige at the Spanish Court. From time to time she returned to Paris, and saw how true was the British Minister's assurance that her daughter was born to reign.¹

Thenceforth nothing could shake her position in Madrid better than in her old position of power, she was now honorary Camarera Mayor. When in 1848 Miraflores was in disgrace there (for he lasted only a few months longer than the Countess), Mérimée had written : " I hope that you will not again assume your gilded chains. I desire for you the influence which you cannot fail to exercise upon the Queen, but not the rather irritating and above all cramping position you had a little time ago." ² To be the mother of the Empress of the French and of the Duchess of Alba gave Doña Maria Manuela a position in Madrid which suited her exactly.

¹ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

² *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo.*

III

THE GLITTER OF THE COURT

Fair as the earliest beam of eastern light,
 When first by the bewildered pilgrim spied,
 It smiles upon the dreary brow of night,
 And silvers o'er the torrent's foaming tide,
 And lights the fearful path on mountain side ;—
 Fair as that beam, although the fairest far,
 Giving to horror grace, to danger pride,
 Shine martial Faith, and Courtesy's bright star,
 Through all the wreckful storms that cloud the brow of war.

The Lady of the Lake.

I

THE bride returned from her honeymoon to the life of a fairy queen. She found herself the centre of the most brilliant Court in Europe, and she personified the triumph of her husband's policy. If for a moment she hesitated to exchange the triumphs of a fascinating woman for the state of an Empress, or that, at other times, etiquette constrained the grace of her movements, it was noticed within a few weeks that every gesture showed, even in her alternations of gaiety and hauteur, that she was the mistress of her splendid Court.

As she and the Emperor stood on a dais in the salon of Louis XIV in the Tuileries, with the Ministers, the Generals, and the Admirals ranged round them, they faced the Corps Diplomatique. The Princesse d'Essling took up her position at the edge of the dais, and named the ladies of the Court as they approached

and curtsied. Men marvelled that, when that generation had seen neither court dresses nor social ceremonies of this kind, and that when, with a few exceptions, the highest society avoided the Tuileries, all went off so well and gave so little reason for a jest. There was, indeed, the wife of a General who looked like a peasant in disguise, and another whose grotesque attire awakened the scarcely repressed hilarity of the assembly ; but one glance from the Empress and there was no hint of further irreverence. For, as there is a look which kisses, so there is one which strikes.¹

But while there were some whose style and bearing were out of place before a throne, these were lost in the whole effect of dresses and uniforms and jewels, in a splendid room, centred upon two remarkable figures, one of whom was becoming the arbiter of Europe. The range of Louis Napoleon's talents could not be ignored by those who came in close contact with him, and this helped to add impressiveness to the ceremonial he had organised. His heavy face, rough pointed beard, his waxed moustache and veiled glance, only showed to greater advantage the exquisite woman who stood crowned beside him. Though the lower part of the face was somewhat too rounded, her profile had the fine perfection of an exquisite cameo. Her small lips, so red and sweet ; her complexion, transparent to the blue veins in her temples and to the scarlet blood that coloured it so finely ; her hair, which was neither fair, nor red, nor auburn, which yet found no other words than those to designate its brilliance ; her blue eyes, so full of life and light that they showed that beyond her vivacity there was in her soul something even angelic—the young Empress seemed indeed a fairy queen. And yet the eyes, with languor in them, beneath a marked

¹ Count Hübner : *Memoirs*.

artificial line of black on eyebrows and eyelids, told of hidden longings and reminded sensitive watchers that

in the very temple of delight
Veiled Melancholy has his sov'ran shrine.

A sense of old grief, and sorrows yet to come, put into the expression of the young Empress an appeal greater than all the radiance of her joy. She had still a taste for strong excitements and a lingering regret for bull-fights. She had the obvious piety of a Spaniard. She had an excellent taste in dress, and made great play with her fan.

The fountain of her radiance, her courage, her vivacity, was an abnormally tense and powerful organism. The young Empress had with her feverishness, and in spite of its reactions, a recurring power of energy. High-spirited, highly strung, hot-tempered, she was all of these—and her impulsiveness made them obvious. But with them went an extraordinary memory and a keen practical mind, with a special taste for politics. This in turn was governed by firm principles, the principles of an unwavering Catholic. And with all these there were not, indeed, the natural passions of the heart of flesh, but the kindly, generous, glowing goodness of a Spaniard who, though she was a sportswoman, felt as a daughter, a sister, a wife and a mother, and each with the deep instincts of loyalty. It was in tune with this rich, sweet, unusual, vital temperament that she worked out her destiny.

The Senate gave a ball in the Luxembourg on February 9, the first Wednesday after the bride and bridegroom had returned. The Empress, wearing a wreath of violets, was robed in a dress of satin brocaded with pearls. This ball was followed by another at the Palais Bourbon. The Court was

organised with a luxurious pomp that outdid anything in Europe. Almost all at it were a little intoxicated. Men and women regarded it as a cotillon ever danced again.¹ And before long, at its sumptuous entertainments, vulgarities mingled with splendour. Lord Malmesbury thought some of the Court women vile and the Empress too good-natured.² Napoleon, however, maintained a strict etiquette in the three Palaces of Compiègne, St. Cloud, and the Tuileries. During the hunting season they went for a while to Fontainebleau, and stopped each autumn at Biarritz in the Villa Eugénie.

But what marked this Court—it marks most courts indeed—was the alternation of splendid ceremonies with individual ease. No royalty ceases to be a human individual, and it is the drama of royal life to harmonise personal taste with official ceremony. A court is never quite adequate to disguise a mediocrity, or to content either a heart or mind. Now both Napoleon and Eugénie had found in years of ambition the opportunities which their social distinction gave them, and of which their brains and the flair for adventure gave them special advantage. Now their ambitions were a satisfied craving, they began to learn what a price satisfied desires extort : how much must be given up of what one took for granted when the world gives one what one asks.

Now both sovereigns craved the simple freedom of their obscurer days. “I went this morning to see M. Isidore,” wrote Mérimée to the Countess of Montijo on New Year’s Day 1854, “who struck me as being marvellously well. As I went out of the room where he was receiving, I heard a little stifled laugh

¹ La Gorce : *Histoire du 2de Empire*.

² *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*.

and a sound *st!* to call me, and I found between two doors a person whom you know. She was *extraordinarily* beautiful. It was quite a long time since I had seen her in full daylight, and I tell you with the sincerity which you know is mine. She was splendid in her health and freshness, laughing too, and spying through a chink the countenance of the said M. Isidore making his eighteen thousand bows.”¹ To neither of them was it natural, as it is to a born royalty, to give by imperceptible signs that impression of apartness with which a prince can put at a distance men, women, and even children of the highest rank, just as these themselves maintain a position of superiority without asserting it—a concealed art as necessary to the successful schoolmaster as it is to the successful marchioness, and to which the British sometimes sacrifice the bloom of their social graces. Napoleon was all through something of a bourgeois. His manners were irremediably affable, and even his bad temper was familiar. He had worn his trousers threadbare as a common schoolboy on a bench at Augsburg, he had spent years in prison and known many privations, and he had learnt also to enjoy relaxing.

The Empress also had that taste: but she had learnt from her earliest youth to alternate it with the formalities of a Spanish noblewoman who had been much at the Court. Almost patriarchal in his simplicity, when he was simple, the *grand d'Espagne* never lost the sense of privilege in which he took his place in an imposing etiquette, almost as essential to him on occasions as the ceremonies of religion. Once these were recognised—and among Spaniards they were unquestioned—one could well afford to be a human being. What Eugénie felt, as a Guzman,

¹ F. Bac : *Mariage de l'Impératrice Eugénie*.

remained her instinct at the Tuileries. And if one passed behind the formalities of the Court, one found in her a woman who in manners and dress was simplicity itself.¹ The difficulty for her came in the social relations apart from ceremonial. Speaking with the people she knew well, her natural talkativeness kept her mind too open : and the woman of intelligence and charm would never cede to the Imperial nonentity, even when Imperial interests required it. For she never attempted to disguise her naturally quick temper ; outbursts not altogether unlike those of a spoilt child if she were crossed even in small matters would, like tears, relieve nerves often strung to a high tension. She was liable to backache, owing to kidney trouble, and was accustomed always to place a cushion in the small of her back. If this were missing in her carriage, there might be a scene. And she would not cloak her feelings to the Emperor himself if he annoyed her.²

To Count Hübner, therefore, she was always Doña Eugenia. A Court dinner might commence with the bristling strictness of a new etiquette ; but afterwards, especially if the Emperor were called away, it became a party between people who had known one another long and well, and finished as a Spanish *tertulia* where, all being intimate, they can call each thing by its own name and say whatever comes into their heads. Chase nature out of Eugénie, and it came back at a gallop. She would pass quickly from one subject to another as Spanish ladies still do, having perhaps more vivacity than wit, and more wit than judgment ; not because wit and judgment are impossible for them, but because they have little use for such qualities when vivaciousness is what they find

¹ *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo.*

² *Revue Hebdomadaire*, July 24, 1920.

charms more effectively. "Doña Eugenia," said Count Hübner, in the autumn after her marriage, "remains what she has always been."¹ A little more careful of herself in public, she loved to relax to her old self among her old friends. The Queen of Spain thought she did this excellently: "neither too high nor too low."² It was true; but there were those among her friends who wished, even while they relished to the full the sparkle of her vivacity, that she would study and read more, take more interest in serious things, and have in fact a little more ballast. She was too fond of things like table-turning, too fond of tricks—too fond, perhaps, of charlatans.³

2

At the moment when she was raised to the throne Spiritism came into an extraordinary vogue in Paris. Lacordaire believed, in 1853, that he had heard tables talk and made them talk. Those in the highest esteem were amused by nothing so much as by attempting to evoke a hero of the past to answer to their arbitrary inquisitiveness, to see a table caracole across a room, to make furniture gyrate, or to hear knockings on the wall. So, they believed, were the mysteries of fate unrolled.⁴

As Galeotti had gone to the old Court at Blois, so in 1857 Douglas Home appeared in Paris. A slim and striking young Scotsman of twenty-two, with red hair and a face of extraordinary pallor—and with these a very finished manner—would arrive in

¹ Count Hübner : *Neuf Ans.*

² Princess Pauline Metternich : *My Years in Paris.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sonolet et Fleury : *La Cour du 2de Empire.*

the salons of the great, explain that his occult powers were inherited, and that many revelations came to him from the unseen world.¹ Then he would enter his hypnotic state, and an extraordinary restlessness would appear to possess the objects round him. Musical instruments, as though touched by invisible fingers, would play their own music ; furniture would dance and jump, and tables overturn.² Handkerchiefs would become possessed of the power of movement, emerge from pockets and knot themselves, furious blows would strike the walls, distant thunders would be heard, cold winds would blow, bells would climb the limbs of those present and tear themselves violently from the hands that seized them. Most frequently of all, the warm but clammy hands of invisible entities would clasp the hands of the men and women present.

The Empress was fascinated and insisted on Home coming to the Tuileries. The spirit of Napoleon I, with surprising readiness, placed himself at the disposition of the medium and answered questions. Queen Hortense appeared to seize the opportunity to give messages to her son, and prophesied that a war would break out in 1859. With an alacrity equally edifying, not to say touching, Rousseau and Pascal, Solon and even St. Louis, would answer when they were called.³ Eugénie herself believed that she had been in communication with her father. "As soon as we were seated around the table," she wrote to her sister, "a hand never stopped pressing mine, or dragging at my skirt to make me give it. Amazed at this insistence, I ask, 'Then you are fond of me?' and at once it answers 'Yes,' shaking my hand most

¹ Princess Pauline Metternich : *My Years in Paris*.

² Du Barrail : *Memoirs*.

³ *At the Court of the Tuileries*. "Le Petit Homme Rouge."

distinctly. 'Have I known you?' 'Yes.' 'Then do please tell me the name you bore on earth,' and by the letters of the alphabet it answered: 'To-day is the anniversary of my death.' Every one asked me who on earth it could be. I answered, 'My father,' and at once the hand pressed mine very affectionately." ¹

Eminent scientists were summoned to the Tuileries to report, but they could not discredit the extraordinary phenomena produced. Napoleon was as much impressed as Eugénie. Both, it is true, had elements of superstition in their nature. Both set great store by the talisman of Charlemagne, which the Emperor had inherited from his uncle through Queen Hortense. Both, raised by destiny to a position so extraordinary, felt that their throne was insecure, and wondered if, after a brief glory, they too were to face the dungeon and the guillotine. The Empress knew that she was surrounded by mysterious influences beyond her control; she was haunted by a sense of affinity with Marie Antoinette, and, apart from that and an unorthodox fancy for looking for auspices in chance texts of the Bible,² she had a taste for the occult which fought very hard at times with the strong common sense which guided her in political affairs. It never distracted her from her part in the great functions of the Court, though even there it would haunt her.

3

At the State balls, however, she would appear radiant. Often as many as four thousand were invited to them. The halls of the Tuileries sparkled

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

² MS. of Dom Elie Herment, O.S.B.

with the red and gold of Imperial chamberlains, which contrasted with the blue and silver of the officers. The dresses and the diamonds of the women were still more magnificent. On the steps of the staircase were the *Cent Gardes* in their breast-plates of polished steel. Dancing began at half-past ten. At eleven their Imperial Majesties were announced, and walked slowly round the halls, presentations being sometimes made ; at midnight the Empress, before leaving the salon and with all eyes turned upon her, would face the company, move her head slowly and gracefully backwards, and then, in a movement which seemed to combine every muscle in the incredible pliancy of an Adalusian dancer, she would bow, and in the enthusiasm that this final triumph always evoked, the sovereigns retired to their private apartments.

The Empress in no way spared herself. She would remain standing through a whole evening, going from group to group, and showing a courtesy to each. Her memory for faces and for families was good. But it was all a strain ; and she was hardly back in her dressing-room before, throwing jewels and diadem into the skirt of her Spanish maid Pepa, she flung herself into her *déshabillé*.¹

On Thursday evenings there were State dinners for noblemen, ambassadors, and officials. Later, the Empress organised her Mondays, which were more personal, and when she received in a boudoir hung with old tapestries. In Lent, concerts organised by Auber took the place of balls. The Emperor would move his head in time with the music to keep awake, and the Empress beat herself with her fan.²

Behind the Court, her amused eyes watched a

¹ Carette : *Souvenirs Intimes*.

² Senelet et Fleury : *Cours du 2^e Empire*.

simpler comedy. She would retire to her boudoir, until she was called by a Damas Hinard, whom she had summoned from Madrid, a little thin old man with a few rare white hairs and an indefatigable smile. With a long black coat and a white tie, like a notary dressed for a ceremony, he carried always a portfolio of dossiers, talked in an unctuous tone, was exceedingly respectful to all women, and bowed double when he met the Empress. Her most faithful servant was Bignet, the chief of her Huissiers, a man of mute and respectful zeal. If she had a message for the Emperor, it was Bignet ; Bignet arranged and kept in order all her appointments. He had charge of two little silver owls which held the salt to put on her buttered toast at tea, at which they always appeared, except when Bignet had packed them for a journey.¹

The task before her was not a light one ; but it was not long before she had made an excellent impression on English diplomats. Lord Malmesbury, dining at the Tuileries in the following November (1853), noticed that her manner of receiving her guests was perfection. She looked, he said, handsomer than ever. She plunged into politics and the Catholic question. She made inquiries about Ireland, and the difficulties of Catholics in England after the institution of the hierarchy. She spoke of attacks on Napoleon in the English newspapers. The Ambassador could not quite get her to understand the principle of an uncensored press.²

Lord Palmerston, who had approved her from the beginning, praised her enthusiastically when he dined at St. Cloud a few months later. Neither the Emperor nor the Empress was overwhelmed by the

¹ Carette : *Souvenirs*.

² *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*.

magnificence in which they lived. "The more one looks at her," he wrote, "the prettier one thinks her." He found her full of talk and animation.

All royalties interested her, and not least the Czar and the Czarina, who had been discourteous to the Emperor, and with whom France and England were soon to be at war. Lord Granville, when it was over, found her still inquiring about the Czarina. Lord Granville spoke courteously, but admitted that he had never heard the Czarina ask anything but whether one had danced much at the last dance. Eugénie, indeed, was never in that difficulty. "*Mais voyez vous,*" she said, "it is not easy always to find questions to ask."

The Empress had by no means an easy time with her husband's family. Prince Napoleon hated her, and it took her a long time to win over Princess Mathilde. These two came to the Court, but sulkily, as though they could not wait until they themselves had possession of it. He would sit moodily in a corner, waiting.

Contrasted with this pair were the supporters of the new régime. There was the Emperor's illegitimate brother—M. de Morny—placid and handsome, courteous to men he despised, and gracious to women he knew he could conquer, rewarding his friends with sinecures. There was M. de Persigny, the fanatical devotee who had followed the Emperor from before the attempt of Strasbourg and now received his reward. The open face and resolute expression, the short whiskers and the waxed moustache, would exert a curious fascination while with burning eloquence he expounded a favourite theme, till loyalty grew passionate and common sense was baffled. There was Madame Cornu, Queen Hortense's god-daughter, the foster-sister of the Emperor. There

was M. de Walewski, the son of the First Emperor and of a Polish Countess; he, as we saw, had been appointed Ambassador to England.

She made also friends of the four Ambassadors, of Nigra the Italian, of Count Hübner the Austrian who was succeeded by Prince Richard Metternich, and Lord Cowley.

With these she at once displayed the keenest interest in the rivalries and alliances of nations, and developed the taste which had grown up from her girlhood in the intrigues of the Spanish Court. And she would approach delicate subjects with the utmost daring. When an Ambassador began with a conventional reference to her charm, she would rapidly change to a question of the sympathy of a foreign Court. So the year 1853 flew past like one perpetual carnival. The Tuileries, St. Cloud, and Compiègne, and again the Tuileries and St. Cloud. Crowds flocked to Paris, which became—to the grief of Ruskin—the centre of the world, and it took on anew the Imperial sense with which it had surveyed the world in the time of the *Grand Monarque* and the First Emperor.¹

4

Only on one occasion was the Empress unequal to her rôle. It was in 1855, when for the first time she was to make a speech alone. The Archbishop of Paris was to present to her, in the throne-room of the Tuileries, the *Société de Charité Maternelle*, founded by Marie Antoinette, of which Eugénie had lately become patron. The Empress had learnt by heart the speech prepared for her. It began by thanking the Archbishop with all her heart for the touching and eloquent words he had just addressed to her, and

¹ Loliée : *Vie de l'Impératrice*, pp. 116-29.

to which she had listened with so much pleasure. As she waited trembling for the Archbishop to begin, she realised that she knew every word of it. Robed in his ceremonial vestments, and attended by a long suite, he faced the full Court in the great salon, and at the foot of the throne made three low bows.

"Madame," he began, but his nerve had left him, and it was some seconds before he could speak more.

"Madame," he began again. But again he could get no further. Perspiration stood out in beads on his brow and trickled down his face. The Empress, who had blushed, turned deadly pale. Then pulling himself together, the Archbishop said once more, firmly and resolutely :

"Madame."

Then there was an interminable pause. Madame de la Bédoyère quite lost her nerve and screamed "Bravo !" and while this was still ringing in their ears, the Empress burst into hysterical sobs. Stumbling down the steps of the throne, she bowed to the Archbishop and hastened away, followed by her whole retinue. To speak out impromptu anything of the nature of a formal speech remained beyond her, though no one had a quicker wit or courage when it was a question of personal talk.¹

5

As she moved among the magical splendours of her Court, her view of politics was that of an amateur rather than a professional. She looked at them as she had learnt from her mother to look at them, when the welfare of countries was subordinate to personal intrigue, when the influence of women could turn the

¹ Princess Metternich : *My Years in Paris*, ch. ii.

scale in the balance of power. Between two quadrilles she would sound an Ambassador on some moot point, but she was still for the most part discreet.¹ The intrigues of Europe were as yet an interest that lagged behind the court paid to her own charm. She was apprised of political moves, certainly, and from time to time threw into diplomacy the balance of her fan. But she did not yet aspire to sit at Councils of State. Questions of international moment were secondary to the arrangements for the State Ball at the Tuileries. She was content to throw on to the central scene of Europe the diversions of Carabanchel.

Both the Emperor and the Empress shared the royal taste for the ceremonial of etiquette, over which they watched with jealous care. And with superb skill the Spanish temperament of the Empress gave the populace what they needed. The policy of Napoleon left nothing undone to develop the industrial greatness of the country, and the development of railways, of commerce, and of industry gave the lead. The Empress busied herself with those whom his policy failed to reach. Charitable and lovely, she won the admiration of the crowd which had refused to welcome her. The newspapers gave the record of her charitable works, her orphanages, her hospitals, her convalescent home, and her crèches. Every morning she rose early and drove out on her errands of charity. Her sympathy with the suffering made demands on her which she never refused.² She never spent vast sums on dress. "*Et dire qu'on m'a reproché mes toilettes,*" (14) she said long afterwards, when she saw how women dressed at Monte Carlo.³ It

¹ Sonolet et Fleury : *Cour du 2^e Empire*.

² *Revue Hebdomadaire*, July 20, 1920.

³ Duchess of Sermoneta : *Things Past*.

was the excellence of her taste which made her look so splendid. She was all through her life a simple and busy woman.

At the same time she loved the dazzle of her festivals. Imperial state was gilded with splendid colour till it looked like a sea of gold. The royal dignity would at times be exchanged for the sportiveness in which at all times the freshets of her vivacity had overleapt the courses of conventional life, or rushed with glittering turbulence from cataract to cataract. In the freedom of a domino, the Empress would take such liberties that at the last a preacher warned her in a public sermon. But the masked ball was only one step further than the *tableaux vivants* which her mother had worked out at Carabanchel. General du Barail, when he first dined at the Tuileries, was surprised at the charm and well-bred ease which he met there, and which struck him as a great contrast to the stiff etiquette at the Court of Napoleon I.¹

At about ten in the evening a toy balloon was thrown into the salon and rolled to the feet of the Empress, who, seated on her accustomed low seat, gave it "*avec une gaminerie tout à fait charmante*"—a kick which raised it to a chandelier and extinguished a candle. It was the opening of a game in which others, including the Emperor, took part. It was finished, of course, before the last candle was out ; for the Empress did not go so far as to scramble out of the salon in the dark. A moment after her play she would again become the sovereign and assume with an imperious gesture the dignity she had abandoned. The very passion of her vitality forced from her the abrupt variances which witnessed in a startling succession the complications of a temperament which

¹ Du Barail : *Memoirs*.

thrilled to excitement and knew no fear. Though at times she would burst into fits of laughter, or would raise her voice in anger, she maintained a dignified composure in the presence of her Court. When the Court dinner was over, she would enter the drawing-room and take her seat in an arm-chair, guarded by the Lord Chamberlain, who kept around her a circle which, but for her own vivacity, had been paralysed and frozen. If the Princess Mathilde were present, and she would at times appear with her friend, Count Nieuwerkerke, or with ladies of doubtful antecedents from the duchies, and laugh and talk in a manner that added nothing to the prestige of the Court, the young Empress would send the Lord Chamberlain to summon her and check the undue expansiveness of the Princess's nature.¹ The state of an Empress and the insouciance of a coquette were alternated in Eugénie rather than mingled. The posture of royalty is better suited to a certain dullness than to the charm which a lovely woman exerts in her transitions from languor to vivacity. For this was her natural self, and she could never be more imperial than when she was most feminine. None suited her better than Mérimée. In his presence she would plunge into argument, or recall old days in Paris or Madrid or Carabanchel, or talk about the coaching trips across the Extramadura. With him she was more obviously what indeed she always was, Eugenia de Guzman. She loved these surrenders to herself when she was with those who, like Mérimée, had known her when she was but a *grande d'Espagne*; then, as she quaintly noted, she was "*dans le monde*," (15) she had the *entrée* to the old Royalist society who withheld from the Empress the welcome they had extended to her as Countess, and

¹ Loliée : *Les Femmes du 2de Empire*.

whom she now shared with the foreign Ambassadors like Lord Cowley, or Count Hübner.¹

No Rochefoucauld, no Gontaud-Biron, no Polignac came to the Tuileries, though before years were over there was a Duc de Montmorency there—a Duc de Montmorency, but of Imperial creation ; and at another time the Prince de Bauffremont and the Duc de Mouchy. But if the Court was not Royalist, neither was it plebeian. The parvenus, the senators, and the deputies who attended were much chastened and seldom dared appear except in knee breeches. But with the Emperor's liaisons on the one side, the Princess Mathilde's friends on another, the illegitimate relatives of the Emperor on another, and on yet another the successful adventurers like Persigny who supported him, it was difficult to keep the Court distinguished. "With the exception of Madame Walewski," wrote Lord Malmesbury in 1862, "the ladies who surround the Empress are decidedly vulgar."² But vulgar as the women might be or not, the Imperial state was there. And it was just this which irked the tomboy that survived in the Empress.

6

As she was walking through her apartments in the Tuileries with a certain Colonel Verly, she stopped to look at a Guardsman standing erect below one of her windows. The artificiality of the man's attitude struck oddly upon her Spanish sense, and she burst into a fit of laughter. She felt it a make-believe, and argued with the Colonel that it would be easy to shake it. "I will answer for my man," said his commander. Walking past, she turned suddenly and furiously rebuked him. But, like the man on

¹ Hübner : *Memoirs*.

² *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*.

horseback in *Don Giovanni*, he stood immovable, still presenting arms. And even when she slapped him, he continued unshaken.¹

The next day she inquired what his name was, and sent him five hundred francs. He declined them. How could he feel it other than a singular privilege that his cheek should have been touched by the Empress of the French ?

Sometimes her escapades were not quite so arbitrary. On one occasion she went in domino to a masked ball at the Duc de Morny's. Among the guests was a prominent Royalist. He was a remarkable squire who, sometimes tender, and sometimes intensely passionate, had great influence with women ; at times submissive, at times commanding, his captivating manners showed that he was perfect at arousing curiosity.

On this particular evening he concentrated all his attention upon one particular woman, whose grace of movement showed to full advantage her tall and supple figure. He felt the presence of a most unusual personality. He was maddened that a detestable piece of velvet should hide her face and keep her secret, and he insisted on knowing who she was. But, with an adroitness equal to his own, she parried his questions. At last he swore that he would follow her carriage home. If that was his caprice, let him follow it, she answered ; but if he was as sincerely impressed as he asserted, he would not seek to surprise her secret. If, however, he would ask any reasonable favour she would grant it.

“ What can I desire but a meeting ? ” he asked.

“ A meeting ! Ah, that is not so simple. Still— you shall have one, though not *chez moi*. You see that domino who is making signs to me to end this con-

¹ Loliée : *Vie de l'Impératrice*.

versation? That is my husband, who is getting impatient and wants to go. *Au revoir*. You shall see me at three to-morrow afternoon near the Lake in the Bois. I shall be in an open landau, and will pass my handkerchief twice across my lips so that you may be quite sure it is myself."

At three the next afternoon the man was there, waiting with that eagerness of curiosity which at such a moment makes a Frenchman almost frenzied. The crowd stirred, and there were signs of great interest. The outriders appeared, and in an open landau the Empress drove slowly past. Twice she passed her handkerchief across her lips.

A little later M. de Bourgoing, who was the equerry on duty, approached, and said that Her Majesty was asking on what day he would like to see the Tuileries.

He wrote saying that to accept her invitation would content the dearest wish of his heart, but that he could not follow his impulse without losing her good opinion, since it would mean sacrificing the principles she knew him to hold.

The Empress did not regard the matter as closed. She met him again at M. de Morny's, and even caused some scandal at the races at Fontainebleau by leaving her suite to speak to him.¹

7

As Imperial state revolved in the Tuileries there was one disquieting element in the situation. It was the relation of France and England to the Russian Empire. The Czar Nicholas, who was the uncle of Mathilde, had indeed established an Embassy at 33 Faubourg St. Honoré ; but in greeting Napoleon as Emperor of the French Nicholas, to the great

¹ Loliée : *Vie de l'Impératrice*.

disquiet of the Chancellories of Europe, had omitted the courtesy of addressing him as *bon frère*. It would, however, be misleading to think that Napoleon's pique governed the policy of the Empire. What disturbed both the Empire and the United Kingdom was the growth of the Russias under an autocracy. The realm of the Czar was the greatest Empire that the world had seen ; statisticians gravely computed that in extent of territory it even rivalled the surface of the moon.¹ Its range offered a double menace to liberal empires in the quality of its civilisation, which had subdued cultures more European than its own, and in its despotic temper. In 1853, after several negotiations with Turkey over the competing privileges of the Greek and of the Latin hierarchies in the Holy Places of Palestine (and France was then the military protector of the Pope), the Czar sent to Constantinople in Prince Mentschikoff the most overbearing Ambassador who has been employed for modern diplomacy. He came with a large military retinue, reviewing on his way the forces of Russia in the Black Sea ; and it was noticed that the Russian Navy had become suddenly efficient. And the range of his demands at Constantinople, completing the impression of his manner, produced a panic.²

He met his match, however, in the person of Lord Stratford de Redclyffe, the last of British Ambassadors to act on his own initiative ; and when Russia demanded a protectorate, the Porte refused. The Czar soon afterwards occupied some Turkish territory, and excitement became extreme. In England the people wanted war ; in France the Court began to anticipate it.

The restiveness of the Turks, and the annihilation

¹ F. A. Simpson : *Rise of Louis Napoleon*.

² *Op. cit.*

of their navy at Sinope, led the two Powers of the West to unite with Turkey, and Cowley found Napoleon willing to join in a war which, though it was not designed to increase his popularity, and in fact involved him in losses which led him to make other fatal mistakes in policy, did add, through the alliance with England, a great personal prestige to himself and to his consort. She saw in it a sacred cause, the cause of the Latin Cross, which was, in other words, the supremacy of the Holy See.¹ She had already a strong influence over the Emperor and wanted to take him to the Crimea, but she was dissuaded in time.²

The war hardly changed the rôle of the Empress. It was not taken too seriously to injure the social functions of Paris, which went on very much as before. The receptions continued, and indeed the Imperial state became more imposing. There was a grand reception of the King of Portugal. But a much greater event in the life of the Empress was the visit to the Queen of England.

8

The Emperor had just satisfied the Prince Consort at Boulogne, and on April 17, 1855, Napoleon and Eugénie were met by him at Dover. They spent the night at the *Lord Warden*, drove through acclaiming crowds next day in London, and towards evening arrived at Windsor.³

The Queen was waiting for them at Windsor. As they drove up in the clear spring evening, "indescribable emotions" made it all seem to Victoria "like

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

² *Lettres de Mérimée à la Comtesse de Montijo*.

³ *The Times*, April 18, 1855.

a wonderful dream." After Napoleon had bowed and kissed her hand, she kissed each of his pallid cheeks. She turned to embrace the Empress, whose grace could not hide her nervousness. She presented her children, little Princess Vicky looking very frightened as she made low curtsies. The thick waxed moustache which had pressed the hand of Victoria now brushed the cheek of the little Prince of Wales. Prince Albert offered his arm to the Empress and she, gracefully reluctant, walked up the gravel staircase in front of the Queen, who was listening to the diplomacies of Napoleon. Napoleon told the Queen how much he had been impressed when she first prorogued Parliament, and asked whether she knew he had been a special constable in 1848. Then he spoke of Sebastopol. The first impression of Victoria was that he was "civil and well bred."¹

While Victoria was being won over against all that she knew about him, Eugénie secured her own triumph. Prince Albert cared for ladies seldom indeed, but here was one for whom he was enthusiastic. The Empress Albert praised won the ungrudging approval of Victoria. Courage and spirit were there, but they were associated with a charm, and grace, and modesty that struck Victoria as the most perfect thing she had ever seen.²

On the night of their arrival at Windsor the Empress's wardrobe had failed to reach her. And at the moment of dressing for dinner, she found that she had nothing to wear. The Emperor counselled a diplomatic indisposition. But Eugénie saw that this would never do. Borrowing from one of her ladies a gown of the simplest blue silk, she was able

¹ *Queen Victoria's Journal*.

² Martin : *Life of Prince Albert*, iii. 245.

to make it suit to perfection the ingenuous modesty of her manner. The Queen, and with her the Court, were enchanted to see her apparently so oblivious of the means of making an impression.¹

Two days of talk at Windsor, when Emperor and Prince were so deeply engaged in conference that the ladies, tired of waiting, had to lunch alone.² Some very intimate questions and counsel from the Queen as to hopes for an heir to the Imperial throne. On one day a lunch at the Guildhall, where they were greeted with storms of applause, while Victoria, she knew not why, was "quite *wehmuthig*," as she waited behind at Windsor. In the evening a performance at the Opera. Next day a great privilege, fitting for the Emperor's birthday: the Queen gave him a pencil-case, and took him to see the Crystal Palace. An ovation met them, and the face of the Empress was "lit up with astonishment and gratification."³

Next day they drove away, and Albert drove away with them. When he came back Victoria noted that he felt just as she did: much pleased with everything, liking the Emperor and Empress (the latter particularly). The Queen wrote to the Empress "*Votre Majesté a su gagner tous les cœurs.*"⁴ (16)

When the Queen went back with Prince Albert on August 18, the counsels of the Queen were beginning to bear fruit, and Eugénie was completely in the charge of the doctors. She received them, however, with Princess Mathilde, at the entrance to St. Cloud, and led up the staircase lined with the famous *Cent Gardes*. As the Queen arrived in her room, every-

¹ Tascher de la Pagerie: *Mon Séjour aux Tuileries*.

² P. Guedalla: *The Second Empire*.

³ *The Times*, April 21, 1855.

⁴ Unpublished letter in the Palacio de Liria.

thing had been so impressive that she was bewildered, though enchanted. Next day the Emperor and Empress drove their guests to Neuilly. Splendour followed on splendour. On the morning of the departure from St. Cloud, Victoria and Albert came to her room with the Emperor. "*Eugénie*, the Queen is there," he called.¹ "She came and gave me a beautiful fan," wrote the Queen, "and a rose from the garden, and Vicky a beautiful bracelet. . . . The Empress has great charm, and we are all very fond of her," she wrote later. Meanwhile Napoleon had accompanied her to the royal yacht at Boulogne, and said he wanted to build one just like it, but not so big. "*Cela va pour la Reine des Mers, mais pas pour un terrestrier comme moi.*" (17) "I should not fear saying anything to him," she wrote again. "I felt—I do not know how to express it—safe with him."²

No one was safe with him: and yet he was so courageous, so kind, so winning, so even-tempered, that after every kind of trial, his wife, who had suffered most of all, actually compared him with Christ.³

¹ P. Guedalla : *The Second Empire*.

² *Queen Victoria's Letters*.

³ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1930.

IV

SOWN FURROWS OF FATE

As blossoming time
That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
To teeming foyson.

Measure for Measure.

I

PRINCE ALBERT had noticed at St. Cloud that the Empress was *enceinte*. "The dear Empress, who was all kindness and goodness, whom we are all very fond of, we saw but comparatively little of, as for *really* and *certainly very* good reasons, she must take great care of herself." So wrote Victoria. She well knew that from no point of view was this an ordinary case; had she not herself made the arrangement which led to it? Had she not herself given the most intimate advice to Eugénie, and sent her to her own physician in London, Lockhart? Her first letter to the Empress had told of the birth of Prince Arthur in 1853.

"MADAM MY SISTER (it had said),—

"The Almighty having in His infinite goodness been pleased to grant me a Prince who was born at Buckingham Palace at ten minutes past one o'clock in the afternoon of the 7th instant, I cannot omit to notify to Your Imperial Majesty an event which is so just a cause of joy to me and to the Prince my Consort." ¹

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

But now the subject of motherhood was discussed in the most intimate and solicitous tone. "My thoughts are often with you," wrote the Queen on August 29, 1855. ". . . Do please remember my plans and don't weaken yourself too much ; above all, go out as much as you can in the air without tiring yourself."

Eugénie had been unable to cope with her own disappointments, and never forgot what she owed to the solicitude of Victoria. "*Telle était ma conversation avec la Reine,*" she said in later years, "*et onze mois après en résulta le Prince Impérial.*" (18) Her first miscarriage had occurred on March 28, 1853—the result, it was believed by some, of taking a bath too hot, by others of a violent burst of temper. There had been no attempt to disguise it ; it was even officially announced, and naturally it was discussed by every one. "*Pendant ces jours là,*" wrote Count Hübner, "*il n'était question à Paris, dans les salons au moins, que de femmes grosses, de couches et de fausses couches. On aurait dit qu'il n'y a, à Paris, que des accoucheurs et des sage femmes.*"¹ Lord Cowley had commiserated with the Emperor. "*C'est faute à réparer,*" (19) His Majesty had replied.²

With the quiet resolution that still marked his character, Louis Napoleon had begun again. But the second time success was not less difficult than before. Many precautions were taken, and to his own great amazement the British Ambassador was even consulted about help from English doctors. But once again the Empress failed to retain the burden of new life within her. It was only after the visit to Windsor that the difficulties were finally surmounted, and in March, 1856, elaborate preparations were made for the arrival of an heir who was

¹ *Neuf Ans.*

² *The Paris Embassy.*

referred to in long orders of the day as "*L'enfant Impérial*," and who, it was confidently expected, would be a boy.

On the morning of Saturday, March 15, there were signs that the end was near. For hour after hour her travail continued: morning turned to afternoon; afternoon to evening; evening to midnight. At last the decisive moment appeared to have arrived, and, according to ancient tradition, and to late enactment, the Minister of State and the Keeper of the Seals, with Prince Napoleon, Prince Charles Bonaparte, and Prince Lucien Murat, entered the Empress's room.¹ Their entry gave her a nervous shock, and when Prince Napoleon fixed his monocle, the course of nature, to the violent torture of the poor woman, was again suspended. Mother and child both were now in great danger. The accoucheurs were forced to use their most violent devices, and, at last, with the aid of instruments, the Prince Imperial was brought forth at 3.15 a.m. "Is it a boy?" "No," said the Emperor, for he feared to excite her. "Is it a girl, then?" she asked. "No," he answered again, for certainly it was not. "Then what is it?" she asked in still greater anxiety. At last she heard the truth.²

It was at six in the morning that the guns of Paris boomed out a hundred and one times. While the city rejoiced, congratulations poured in from every part of Europe; all night, indeed, men had been waiting at their posts to receive and answer the message that the first sovereign of Europe had an heir. Before two hours had passed, answers had been received. The baby immediately received twenty-eight different Orders; the Grand Cordon of the

¹ "Le Petit Homme Rouge."

² *Révue de Paris*, Oct. 1, 1920.

Legion of Honour was attached to his cradle, and the Pope became his godfather.

On June 14, Napoleon and Eugénie drove to his christening in Notre-Dame in the carriage in which, three years before, they had driven to their wedding. The Prince was in another carriage in front of theirs. The sun was beginning to sink, and it threw a warm glow on the Seine, and gilded the poplars. A great crowd lined the streets and greeted him with frenzied shouts. The Marshals of the Crimean War were their escort ; the air vibrated to the clarion notes of triumph. Neither Emperor nor Empress could speak. Her heart swelled with pride and joy. " It is through this child, through my son," she thought, " that the dynasty of the Napoleons will take final root in the soil of France, just as the House of Capet was planted in it eight hundred years ago. It is he who will put the final seal on the work of his father." ¹ Yet had not the same ceremonial greeted the King of Rome and the Comte de Paris who, a few years later, were exiles ? That sense of impending sorrow was never absent from the great triumphs of Eugénie. It was no *memento mori* that the secret voice whispered in her ears : it was a vague warning that before she died she must give up, one by one, the highest ambitions that her heart cherished. Hers was not a nature which craved for the delicious thrill or the delicious softness of the sweet warm tide of feeling which is one with the blood which beats from the heart of flesh. She was too tense to know the comfort of those relaxations which are the common lot of men and women of earth ; full at once of both energy and of idealism, she felt with more than a warm-hearted woman's love. But the heart of her passion was in her head. The tendrils with which

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

she clung were tendrils of the spirit. She loved with an intensity so high that few mothers would understand it, because her baby was merged into unity with an historic personage: the heir of the Bonapartes. When the Emperor raised him aloft after his christening to show him to the people in Notre-Dame, her emotion overcame her so that she could no longer stand. It was a woman's weakness—but a woman whose character had raised her to sovereign majesty and power.

2

Five days later Cardinal Patrizi arrived from Rome bearing the highest token of Papal favour reserved for Catholic queens. It was a golden rose-bush in a vase of gold, on a base of lapis lazuli, and was said to signify, in the eyes of the faithful, "that most magnificent flower, the joy of all the Saints." This prized emblem Eugénie kept in her bedroom at the Tuileries, surrounded by a blessed palm which the Pope sent her at every anniversary.

The birth of the Prince Imperial was the final blow against the family of King Jérôme. And the Prince as he grew up came to be no lover of Prince Napoleon. Perception dawned on him early: at three he could enjoy an ovation and go through royal functions with patience. He learnt, in the way a child does learn, that he was a centre of importance, and, though he could be charming, he was no abnormal child in subservience of will or mood. His health caused little disquiet, though Barthez, who was appointed to be his doctor, early noticed a tendency to constipation. Was it inherited? the young doctor asked himself; he dared not question further. The child had too strong a likeness to his father to be considered good-looking. But he had much of the

same charm. The army was from babyhood his chief interest, and nothing pleased him more than to wear a uniform or to draw pictures of soldiers.¹ When, at five years old, he was thrown into the sea at Biarritz, he screamed. They asked him why, when he never screamed at a cannon. "*Parce que je commande au canon,*" he said, "*et je ne commande pas à la mer.*"² (20)

3

Eugénie expected a fate to hang over her boy. At Biarritz, in 1855, she had once sprung out of bed on hearing a fire-bell. Then, for the first time, she felt his body move within her, and from that moment she had had a presentiment that he would die a violent death.³ She might have discerned its messenger in the Hapsburg prince who came almost at once to visit her. While she was convalescent, she received a visit from the Emperor of Austria's brother, the Archduke Ferdinand Max. A handsome and winning man, with a fair beard parted in the middle, an eye quick to observe, and a heart ready to enjoy, he could not dream how ghastly were the issues in which this Paris visit was to involve both him, his hosts, and their baby, and the beautiful Princess he was to choose for his bride in the next Court he visited. Though, on his arrival, he felt a little patronising to the new Imperial family, the

¹ Barthez. The little Prince's greatest friend was Louis Conneau, the doctor's son. Madame Carette noticed that one day when they had quarrelled over their games and Conneau had gone home, the Prince kept up a stoic front till at the end of his supper he was brought a strawberry cream which they were to have eaten together ; then he broke down. He hadn't the heart, he said, to eat it alone.

² *Mérimée à Panizzi.*

³ E. Lavisse : *Revue de Paris*, Oct. 1, 1920.

Archduke very soon came under the spell of Napoleon and Eugénie. How was he to admit it? Franz Josef must be prepared gradually ; so in two different letters the young Archduke wrote back to his reigning brother. Led up the marble stairs past the *Cent Gardes* to the Throne Room of the Tuileries, the young Archduke found himself in the presence of a short man with heavy shoulders, short legs, and a huge head, a veiled and restless gaze—a man who held out a quivering, plump, shapeless, hairy hand and stammered forth unintelligible noises. “ His short, unimposing stature, his exterior which is utterly lacking in nobility (the Archduke had first written vulgar), his shuffling gait, his ugly hands, the shy inquisitive glance of his lustreless eyes ” all awoke misgiving.¹ And yet, how was it ? . . . before very long the Archduke felt that somehow here was a man to respect ; in fact here, he said in the end, was the model sovereign. For somehow the first impression would disappear : the glazed eye would moisten and sparkle, the cowed expression would change to one of firmness, while a playful smile, good-humoured, sympathetic and yet shrewd, would play around the corners of his mouth and give his face brightness and charm.²

When Max met Eugénie, he was for a moment disappointed. Lying on a *chaise longue* in a darkened room, she was still too weak to show her beauty to advantage ; but it was there. Her red-gold hair was drawn across her head, and a rose set coquettishly over her ear. A mass of white lace framed the broad oval of her chin, and met the sky-blue silk of her robe, while in her left hand was the Spaniard’s inevitable fan. She leant shyly forward. The Archduke kissed

¹ Corti : *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*, i. p. 46 (Eng. trans.).

² Unpublished M.S. in Vienna National Archives, referred to as V.N.A.

with *empressement* her tiny hand, and at this, in her modesty, she seemed almost abashed. "I have often had occasion to observe this trait of humility," wrote the Archduke, "both in her and her Imperial husband : a delicate, disarming, winning tact, which they owe either to instinct or to diplomacy, seems to ask pardon for their sudden elevation and to reconcile the world." The effect indeed was to exact such homage as would put them at their ease. If the Archduke did her any little service, she thanked him always with a mingling of modesty and dignity. Once, when he arranged a hassock for her feet at the theatre, she seemed most moved and touched as she begged him to forgive her causing this trouble, and the Emperor turned to a lady of the Court with the words, "*C'est trop.*"¹ (21)

But when, sparkling with jewels and queenly in her diadem, her crinoline waving around her, she entered the Court like a comet, a constellation, though the sweetness and dignity were still there, she struck him as perfectly adapted to her majestic part. But what was the most touching and affecting of all was the look of gentle sadness in her eyes which mingled so strangely with her star-like serenity, and which became so dramatic beneath the strong black line along her eyebrows and beneath her eyes.

As she talked to him at the table, he was impressed by her naïf freshness. Driving in the park, she said, she had been struck so pleasantly by a delicious sailor from her yacht that she could not take her eyes off him, and gave orders to her equerry to turn the carriage and give her another view.

The Archduke had heard another story which illustrated her sporting taste. When the Emperor was at Plombières, and in the intervals of his encounters

¹ Unpublished MS. in V.N.A.

with an Italian lady, found the douche more beneficial than had been expected, the Empress found her own diversions. At sunset a billow of crinolines, a regiment of frock coats, arrived at the jetty of St. Cloud, and Eugénie sailed majestically up the Seine, like Cleopatra in her barge. At midnight she had a champagne supper on the river above the Pont de la Concorde, while the citizens of Paris crowded to the banks. The Emperor, ever watchful, heard of it, and sent messages through Bacciochi that a stricter etiquette must be maintained.¹

4

The Emperor and Empress, however, seemed still to be on excellent terms. His affection no one could doubt. There were those who thought it ludicrously demonstrative ; he would walk arm in arm with his wife on the sands at Biarritz like a simple bourgeois. He loved to tease her. She spoke of trees being planted at Madrid when she was born : " Then they must be thirty-six," he said, though all knew she was no more than thirty. Another time she spoke of bull-fights and toreros. They mentioned some of whom she had never heard. " Where were they then when I was in Madrid ? " she asked. " They were being nursed," he said. The Empress turned to him, only half understanding. Then, " What insolence ! " she said. The whole room rang with laughter.²

In general, when the Emperor was present, she maintained the dignity of her rank. In his absence, however, she would relax so much in speech and gesture as to give, even though it were only by a nuance, an impression which occasioned gossip. She

¹ Unpublished MS. in V.N.A.

² Barthéz : *La Famille Impériale*, xv.

could never quite understand the French point of view. On using some expression which shocked her entourage, she would blush and ask, "Have I said something wrong?" It was easy to understand how, to those who knew nothing of Spaniards and their way, there seemed reason for echoing the gossip which had met the announcement of her engagement.

Spanish also was her love of bull-fights. "How can I help it," she asked, "when from my earliest childhood I have seen them once a week?" She knew every turn of the sport. She was ready for any daring, and always wanted to harden her boy, and then at the smallest *billeversée* she would lose her head. Fighting like a bulldog, as he said, against Barthez for spiritism and magnetism, she would argue for two hours at a time. But she showed more regard for her opponent when she had finished.

If at Biarritz she could seize an opportunity to cross the Spanish frontier, it was her great joy. To hear again the wild cadence of Spanish song, to see the vivacity of Spain, to see the Spaniards dance and play—it made her whole personality light up with the pure joy of coming home from exile. One September evening when, after a picnic in the Pyrenees, the Basques began to dance to the guitar, the Empress could hold out no longer. Leaving aside her cloak and hat, she began a fandango. Simple and charming her allure, delightful the expression of her features. Once again she was at home, and she was free.¹

She always loved hard exercise in the open air: she danced, she rode, she ran, she walked with the same lithe grace which made her curtsy triumphant. In every gesture the poise alike was perfect: her muscles and figure were those of a gymnast in perfect

¹ Barthez : *La Famille Impériale*, xxx.

health : and nowhere was her strength more obvious than when she was on board a yacht. Her ladies almost fainted on their climb into the Pyrenees, but the Empress planned, none the less, for the next day a picnic on the sea. "Might that not prove even more trying for the Court?" asked Princess Metternich. "Good Heavens!" said the Imperial Amazon; "you surely don't mean to insinuate that the ladies are bound to go to pieces on sea as on land!"

At two o'clock in the afternoon they boarded the little *Seagull* and steamed for Fontarabia. In a very short time the Court and its guests were all prostrate, and the Empress alone was able to serve them. When they reached Fontarabia it was too rough to land. When, at seven in the evening, they reached Biarritz, its shore was not less dangerous. At last, at two in the morning, they dared the bar of the Adour. Eugénie had not shown the slightest sign of discomfort or nervousness till, as she landed, she met Napoleon. "Our picnic has not had much success," she began. "There must be an end to these escapades," he said furiously. "There have been far too many of them as it is."¹

The stays at Biarritz were a time of holiday; ceremony did not curb their personal fancies, and if they remembered they were reigning, it was only to enjoy it. The Empress would walk free along

The gleaming and the humming sands
Where windy surges wend

and meet the sea, and, as the weather suited her mood, would sail or swim.

With her Court she was as playful as she was imperious. Barthez, suiting himself to this, turned to her with a mixture of mockery and respect when,

¹ Princess Metternich : *My Years in Paris*.

in spite of a cold, she planned an outing. "I don't approve of this trip," he said; "I forbid it." The Empress answered with a gesture with which gutter-boys are familiar. Dropping on his knees, he went on, "Let us all cast ourselves at Her Sacred Majesty's feet!" The Empress laughed, and raised him with one hand, while with the other she lightly slapped him. "And that," he wrote, "is how I play the doctor in this rather eccentric world."

In the evening she would sit with her ladies at a great round table, working her tapestry. At times she would be silent, at times garrulous—too garrulous, some thought—but she believed she was still discreet. "I talk a great deal of past events," she said, "but never of contemporary ones."¹

5

Napoleon and Eugénie had been married not quite five years when, at the height of their prosperity, they were driving to a gala performance at the Opera on January 14, 1858.

At half-past eight in the evening, as the Duke of Saxe Coburg was waiting to receive them at the foot of the grand staircase of the Opera House in the Rue le Peletier, they drove up with an escort of Lancers and preceded by a carriage of attendants. But as they stopped at the entrance a grim explosion shook the air. The gas-lights were extinguished, the awning over the entrance was torn to tatters, glass crashed in every direction, a shot pierced the Emperor's hat, the coachman and footmen were wounded, some of the escort killed, and even among the gendarmes and the crowd there were other casualties. At this moment the carriage door was opened, and the

¹ Barthez : *La Famille Impériale*.

Empress faced an assassin. But at the same moment the police opened the door on the other side, and a few minutes later the Emperor and the Empress were bowing before an ovation in the theatre. The Emperor had wished to stay and speak to the wounded, but Eugénie had stopped him with the words : "*Pas si bête : assez de farces comme ça !*" (22) Cheer followed cheer, and Eugénie looked calmness itself. Napoleon, on the other hand, seemed completely demoralised. It could hardly have been physical cowardice. What was it then? Count Hübner guessed the reason : it was that in the moment of Imperial triumph he had been abruptly reminded of the engagements which he had made in his youth with people of a very different order. Both Emperor and Empress, however, were controlling a tense anxiety while they awaited the return of a messenger who had been sent over to the Tuileries to know if the little Prince was safe. Meanwhile the gala went on, with its selections from *William Tell*, *Maria Stuart*, *La Moneta de Portici*, and even the *Masken-ball*, which leads up to the murder of Gustavus II. King Jérôme, Prince Napoleon, Princess Mathilde, Princess Murat, Marshals, Diplomats, Ministers hurried to the Imperial box.

When Napoleon and Eugénie drove back through streets especially illuminated, the crowds gave cheer on cheer. At the Tuileries Lord Cowley and other Ambassadors awaited them. But they waited only for leisure to hurry to the baby's room, and, finding him there quietly asleep, both the Emperor and the Empress wept.

The results of this attempt affected the whole after-life of the sovereigns. What was behind the attempt? It was above all a demonstration against French support of the Holy See. Orsini, with his accom-

plices Gomez and Rudio, aimed at avenging on Napoleon his defection from the Carbonari, and on Eugénie her Catholic influence on politics. And, curiously enough, she took the part of the assassin. In an access of sentimentality which was rare with her, and which showed once again how curiously her imagination and her nerves had been affected by the birth of the Prince Imperial, she pleaded violently for clemency to Orsini. The eloquence of his declamations, the melodramatic posture he adopted, his statuesque defiance in the court, had a certain element of Spanish baroque in them which Eugénie could not resist. It moved her to tears. Again and again she threw herself before the Emperor. "You can't send this man to the guillotine. You cannot do it, you of all men. You will never again find such an opportunity to be magnanimous."¹ Napoleon himself grew sentimental as well as superstitious and fearful. Was he to condemn to death those with whom he had shared the ideals, the vows of youth? To work on him, Eugénie in a fury of excitement offered to visit Orsini in his cell, that she might extract some word of repentance with which she could more passionately argue for clemency. Her judgment was paralysed, and Napoleon's own almost gave way, because always that old appeal kept its own touch of fear, and its own twisted conscious restlessness. But the Ministers kept firm. Fould, Walewski, Rouher, Delangle, Magne, backed by the Ambassadors, pointed to the crowd's demand for order, and to the fact, even more unarguable, that the victims were after all neither the Emperor nor the Empress, but others, of whom no less than a hundred and fifty had been injured.

Napoleon turned in every direction for some support

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

to her hysterical pleading. Judges, Privy Council, Ambassadors, even clerics were equally clear. And yet, at the back of all, Orsini, though he was guillotined, *won his point*. Napoleon could not stay the course of justice, but "the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," and in his heart of hearts he decided that Italy must be championed.

What wild disorder of youth re-arose to stifle interest and reason, why he set up another power to threaten him on the flank while Prussia was beginning to unite Germany, why he weakened Austria which was a bulwark on the other side, why he alienated the Catholic influence, can be explained only by that curious force of liberal idealism within him which he accepted eagerly as the heritage of the Bonapartes, and on which he had written in his treatise, *Les idées Napoléoniennes*.

Once the step was taken, Eugénie saw the danger. It was not she who engineered the meeting with Cavour at Plombières. And certainly she had little reason to love the sensuous *intrigante* whom Cavour sent to her Court. But her influence was secondary. She could not but act in harmony with her husband, and with a slow but efficient elaboration he prepared to alienate Austria and to espouse the ambitions of Sardinia. The new trend of politics looked the more fatal to the Empress when she saw it concentrated in the sinister attractiveness of Contessa Castiglione.

6

Born in 1840, Donna Virginia Oldoini was mature at the age of fifteen, and indeed so precocious that she already encouraged offers of marriage. When Count Castiglione was in search of a wife, he met Count Walewski in London, and was advised to

return to Florence to ask the Marchesa Oldoini for her daughter. He found a loveliness that was superb : the fashion of her dress showed to a finer advantage the enticing lines of her neck, her bust, her arms. Her features were equally well formed, her abundant hair fell in rich curls—but her hard expression robbed her look of real distinction. Nevertheless, the voluptuousness of her charm made many men feel her to be the most beautiful woman of her time. No sooner had she married Castiglione than she allowed herself to be captivated by Victor Emmanuel, perhaps the grossest and coarsest of all royalties of the time. Cavour, who was related both to her friends and her husband's, decided to turn her attractions to political advantage, and she arrived in 1856 at the Court of Napoleon, and was invited to a grand ball at the Tuileries. She chose the moment well. As she entered even the music ceased. A thrill of admiration passed through the room like an electric current. The radiant Empress advanced a step to meet her. The Emperor, walking to the place where she had enthroned herself, led out the newcomer in the next valse. Her success was complete. Her manner then, and at all times, was the same : engrossed with her dress and her whole appearance, her glance, as she walked through the room, was ever at the mirror ; again she would reduce to order a rebellious curl, and with deft touches draw fresh attention to her unrivalled coiffure. Then her expression would resume its confident, and at times truculent, disdain, and she would gaze around the loveliest women at the Court with the crude assurance that she was their equal in birth, their superior in beauty, their judge in intellect. Her costumes were always original ; but the boldest was when she came as Queen of Hearts to a reception of Madame de Walewski's.

Gauze hardly veiled her exquisite bosom, and over skirt and bodice was thrown a chain of hearts which followed downwards a too suggestive line, which, it was rumoured, provoked a comment from the Empress.¹

Her object was not only to seduce Napoleon, but to win him over to Cavour's cause, as she did. It would be fatuous to acquiesce in her boast that she created and saved Italian unity; it would be equally absurd to ignore the part she played. There can be no doubt that the Emperor succumbed to her charms. A son was born, who was handed over to Evans, the dentist, to be brought up, and who, as Dr. Hugenschmidt, passed not unnoticed in Bonapartist circles till his death in 1929.

Castiglione's will directed that she should be buried in the nightdress of cambric and lace which she had worn at Compiègne in 1857. Nothing, it seemed, had she cherished as much as her frailty. "I have no doubt," wrote Lord Clarendon to Lord Cowley, "that she fulfils all the conditions of a *coquaine*." One evening, when she retired, on the excuse of a headache, from a performance of the *Comédie Française* that was being held there, the Emperor became distracted, and soon left the Empress alone before every one. This was to be only one of several bitter humiliations.

7

While the Emperor was developing his Italian policy, he naturally wanted to make sure of the attitude of England, which had been by no means gratified by the way French papers referred to her harbouring Orsini and the conspirators. There was naturally in France a very strong feeling against

¹ Loliée : *Women of the Second Empire*.

Mazzini himself. Accordingly Napoleon and Eugénie planned to meet Victoria at Cherbourg in August 1858 and talk matters over.

The *Victoria and Albert* arrived on August 6, and in a dress of lilac and white silk, an immense crinoline, and a black and white lace bonnet, Eugénie went with Napoleon in the evening to pay a visit. Albert noticed that the Emperor was out of humour with all that was said about him, and the visit was a strain for each of them. "The Emperor was embarrassed, the Empress less, and very friendly," wrote the Queen.¹ Napoleon asked Victoria if the English were really afraid of an invasion. Victoria was glad to have the visit over and get back to *Jane Eyre*. But the exchange of ceremonial went on, and Eugénie, though she spoke frankly of her anxiety about England's attitude towards her husband, continued fluent and friendly. The meeting terminated at a great dinner on board *La Brétagne*, where Victoria and Eugénie both listened very nervously to their husbands speaking, the Queen unable to swallow her coffee. But at the end they all spoke frankly of what they felt, and seemed reassured.

When the Queen had gone, the Emperor and the Empress commenced their tour in Brittany. Not since the visit of Anne de Bretagne at the beginning of the sixteenth century had the Bretons seen royalty among them. On board a battleship they sailed into the harbour of Brest, the morning after they left Cherbourg. As they approached, a sumptuous barge was rowed out to meet them by thirty oarsmen. It had been built for Napoleon I, on his visit to Antwerp. Two gilded statues, Glory and Fame, held out a canopy of scarlet velvet sewn with golden bees, surmounted by the Imperial crown and an eagle with

¹ *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 1st series.

unfolded wings, whilst nereids and tritons, sounding a trumpet, seemed to drag the luxurious vessel through the water ; it appeared a survival from the days of Cleopatra. It was in this that the sovereigns were rowed to the shore, and went in a procession to the Te Deum at St. Louis.¹ The whole town was decorated with flags and garlands, with banners waving from Venetian masts. The place was palpitating with the spirit of a time gone by. The second evening there was a ball, and the Empress appeared in all her splendour. She wore a robe of blue tulle sown with thin threads of silver. Her exquisite neck rose from this as from a cloud, and with that long look, blue and luminous and mild, with which she accompanied her famous curtsy, she threw a charm of magic over the worshipping people who watched her. With an irresistible charm, which was at the same time modest and impressive, this wonderful movement, with which the Empress greeted alike the great and the humble at every occasion of ceremony, gave the tone of graciousness to the scintillation of her presence. It claimed sovereign honour, even as it captivated by womanly charm.

Her hair was drawn up from neck and temples to her diadem. Her complexion had the fresh purity of a young girl, and her features a queenly fineness. A perfection of simple taste in dress and bearing made the brilliant jewels she wore on her corsage and her neck seem natural there.

Her eyes alone would have made a face remarkable : two fine eyes of a deep sparkling blue, surrounded by shadow, with a sparkle where mildness alternated with energy and spirit ; the delicious smile, the rounded chin, the gleaming teeth, the shining, transparent whiteness of her skin ; the feet

¹ Carette : *Ma Maîtresse*.

smaller than those of a girl of twelve. None of these, however, explained her sovereign attraction, which was that of noble dignity, so gracefully sustained, with such a supple and unselfconscious bearing, that it suggested a perfect harmony between her appearance and her character.

Before them, after the first quadrille, fifty couples of Breton peasants passed and genuflected with the same solemnity as in a church ; then danced their dances, which last for hours on the borders of Brittany. The long procession of banners, the bizarre magnificence of the peasant dress, the grave attitude of the young men with their long hair—and most of them good-looking ; something noble in the simplicity of these peasant women ; the fierce primitive music, all in the midst of mirrors and banners before the lovely Empress, made an effect of an experience of entering another world.

As they proceeded through Brittany, the cavalcades, which led the sovereigns from their village till they met those of another, gave the impression of a people moved by incomparable enthusiasm. And so on to Ste. Anne d'Auray, St. Malo, and St. Servan.¹

8

The war with Italy broke out in the following year, and it strengthened Eugénie's position. At the time of the Orsini murders, it was realised that steps must be taken to meet the situation that would arise if the Emperor died. It could mean only that the Empress should be Regent till the Prince Imperial came of age. All this naturally pacified her : but she looked with no favourable eye on a war against Austria. Count Hübner wrote on January 14, 1859,

¹ Carette, *op. cit.*

that she was much disturbed to see how the masses were excited by the idea of war. On February 8 he had another long talk with her. "The public cannot believe in peace," he said, "while France is increasing her armaments." "Then," answered the Empress, "you must stop sending troops to Lombardy."¹ The whole business weighed on her mind. She looked back to her childhood at Carabanchel, and felt an irresistible desire to be back there with everything forgotten, including the very existence of Italy and Austria.²

Meanwhile a royal marriage had strengthened the Italian policy of the Emperor. At the instance of Cavour, who had discussed the matter at Plombières, Victor Emmanuel made his daughter Clothilde his Iphigenia. A pious and dull-eyed girl of sixteen, she was quietly handed over to the infamy of Prince Napoleon. "It is positively horrible to see that poor little frail creature," wrote Lord Cowley, "by the side of that brute—I can call him nothing else—to whom she has been immolated."³ Eugénie had no patience with either of them, nor yet with Victor Emmanuel.

The King of Sardinia was in no way *sans reproche*. His personality was even more repellent than his son-in-law's. "He looks like a bull," Lord Clarendon wrote of him when he came to Windsor. Greville at the same time had noted of him that he was "frightful in person, brusque in his manners, unrefined in his conversation, very loose in his conduct, and very eccentric in his habits." Queen Victoria was to write of him in her *Journal* that "he was a strange, wild man, and to a certain extent lawless in

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

² Unpublished letter in the Palacio de Liria.

³ *The Paris Embassy*.

his passions (for women especially).” It was noticed when he was in Paris that he did not veil the fact that he looked on women as his prey. The venue of his jests was too obvious, and in a conversation with Mme Walewski he asked her point blank about her relations with her husband. “*Il y a une bonne chose que j’ai decouvert à Paris,*” he said to another lady; “*les Parisiennes ne portent pas de caleçons. C’est un ciel d’azur qui est ouvert à mes yeux.*” (23) It had not pleased Eugénie when, in 1856, this King had written her a flattering letter about her charms: he was, as he himself said, *très mauvais sujet*. (24) It did not please her, in 1859, when he wrote to her again for the immolation of Clothilde in the same gauche and fulsome style, for even he had qualms.

“MY DEAR SISTER AND MADAME,—

“I make you a present of my daughter (he began brutally). I beg Your Imperial Majesty, who is so kind and who in her kindness has taken pity on the father to take the daughter under her wing; for poor child, she is very young and has need of a sister so kind to help her with advice. I hope you will like her. She is like a partridge, and has no other ambition but to be nice to you.

“Forgive my awkwardness, but I am always, my dear sister and madame, with huge affection and huge respect,

Your Imperial Majesty’s
Affectionate brother,

VICTOR EMMANUEL.”¹

The “partridge” was so dowdily apparelled that, in the words of Princess Mathilde, her dresses put even those of the Queen of Holland to shame.

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.

Clothilde was not only uncompromisingly dull : she was downright sulky. But it was not mere gaucherie ; it was an obstinate sense of superiority. With the dark pride of the House of Savoy, she was not prepared to bow to a sovereign who was not born a royalty. The Empress, whose sense of her excellent ancestry was acute, but who always supported it with personal distinction, looked on the Sardinian girl as a rustic who needed education. If Clothilde fell asleep at the Opera, Eugénie would send a courtier to awaken her ; and means were found to warn her to be less gauche at Court. But such a warning only intensified her attitude. She appeared more and more rarely at the splendid entertainments at the Tuileries : and when she was dragged there, seemed with her vague and dull eyes to be walking in a dream ; or at the most like a mentor from a grimmer region to give a warning about the pomps and vanities of this wicked world and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. A sombre piety took possession of her whole life, and in the vigorous performance of her Christian duties, as she conceived them, a daughter of Calvin seemed to confront a mistress of Sevillian dance.

Her husband, too, became increasingly obnoxious to the Empress. Socialist and anti-clerical, he became more and more crudely opposed to her : his bitterness was intensified by the birth of the Prince Imperial, which he seemed to regard as a trick of Eugénie to keep him from the throne. She on her part felt for him an unmitigated contempt. If her son were like him, she said, she would strangle her son.

When the war actually began, Eugénie greeted it in a state of nervous excitement which found a

religious outlet. Taking a common carriage, she went the round of five churches to offer her prayers.¹

When Napoleon set out to fight in Italy, Eugénie not only reigned but also ruled in France. She settled with the Prince Imperial and a small suite at St. Cloud, where she lived very quietly, studying each political question as it arose. There were the Cabinet meetings each week : the two at the Tuileries she did not attend, but she presided over that at St. Cloud. Not so foolish as to adopt the authority of her husband, the Empress remained a woman at the Council, deferring to men and yet inviting their deference. No difficulties arose. She took so much to the strenuous business of the regency that she said sometimes that when it was over she was afraid she would be bored. She was in fact captivated by her work, which she did excellently,² and a victorious campaign gave her the occasions for ceremonial triumphs. After the news of the victory at Magenta reached her on the afternoon of June 5, accompanied by Clothilde, she drove in an open carriage through the Boulevards and along the Rue de Rivoli. On June 13, an envoy from the Emperor arrived with the captured Austrian banners. On June 24, before the Empress had risen from bed, a telegram arrived with the news of the victory at Solferino. The Empress decided on a second Te Deum at Notre-Dame.

In the open carriage, the little Prince, in a white frock with a blue sash, sat at his mother's side, and opposite Mathilde and Clothilde ; they drove on in the brilliant summer morning, escorted by officers. They entered the Cathedral in which the Empress

¹ Tascher, ii. 2.

² Baroche : *Memoirs*. Sir L. Simmons in *Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1892.

had been married, and in which she had seen her son christened. They took their places. They assisted at the act of worship. They drove back to the Tuileries. "Nothing," said Eugénie forty years afterwards, "could convey to you the crowd's enthusiasm. There were moments when we were so deafened by the cheering that we passed the bands without hearing them. On our way back, they began to pelt us with flowers : they were like machine-gun fire beating on the breast-plates of the *Cent Gardes* ; our carriage was filled with them. My son was quivering with excitement, clapped his hands, and threw pretty kisses to the crowd. Then, too, I had the glorious faith that God was designing for my child the glorious mission of crowning his father's labours." ¹

But a few days later she wrote to her sister : " With the means of destruction at our command nowadays, a battle becomes practically a butchery." ²

10

The final scene of the Italian triumph was not in Paris. Emperor and Empress went together to visit the Savoy which was added to France as a recompense for her part in dislodging Austria. The chief festivity was on the lovely lake of Annecy, which in soft picturesqueness united castle and village and mountains with the serenity of an indented sheet of water. Nature offers no more beautiful picture in the whole of France, and the inhabitants of Annecy had decided to make the visit a great experience by an appeal to the imagination of their sovereigns. The tour had been not a journey but a triumphal march.

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

² Unpublished, June 28, 1859.

Napoleon seemed transfigured with the welcome. He seemed to pass through the realm of an enchanter. The Empress shared to the full his high enjoyment. Annecy was to be the culmination of it all. A flotilla of light boats illuminated by festoons of coloured lanterns followed the Imperial gondola, which was draped in purple and rowed by twenty rowers. On a dais in the stern the Emperor and Empress were enthroned. Bands of music poured over the water the strains of joy and glory. Beneath a starry sky, rockets and wheels of fire would light up the wild scenery of lake and mountain. Bonfires gave to each hill a crest of flame.

Coming from a dinner of welcome, the Empress wore over her superb neck her most dazzling jewels ; her famous diadem rested on her brow. Warm as the night was, she had thrown over her shoulders a great scarlet burnous fringed with gold. For a moment, to get a better view of the unique scene, she stood erect on the dais ; and at once there arose from the attendant boats the repeated shouts of "*Vive l'Impératrice !*" She radiantly acknowledged them. "Why, you look like a dogaresa !" Napoleon said, and indeed she felt as though she were indeed in her Bucentoro. A little more and she, too, would have thrown her ring into the lake for the *fiançailles*, not of Venice and the Adriatic, but as a pledge of the lasting union of France and the Bonapartes.¹ It really meant for her, alas, a very different thing : a rapid alienation between the Bonapartes and the Holy See.

II

From Annecy they went on to Chambéry and Grenoble. In the museum at Grenoble she found a

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

portrait of Stendhal, and greeted it with the joy of meeting an old friend. "When he told the story of the Emperor's battles," she wrote to her sister on September 6, "and we listened with so much pleasure, how far we were from thinking that it would be my son who would be the descendant and the representative of this dynasty."¹ They went on to Marseilles and Toulon, where they embarked for Corsica to see, as it were, the cradle of the family. Eugénie left a bust of the Prince Imperial in the home of the First Emperor. From Ajaccio the sovereigns sailed for Algiers. Everywhere their passage was a triumph, and their path was gay with hopes.

And yet one of the greatest sorrows of Eugénie's life drew nearer with each ovation. Her Fate, with that dramatic relentlessness which haunted Æschylus and Euripides, grimly chose glory as his courier of disaster. She never knew a triumph which had not at its core a presentiment of doom.

But for the Prince Imperial, there was no one whom the Empress loved more than her sister. Each had given to the other the devotion of a lifetime. When the sovereigns set out, the Duchess of Alba was not well ; but not so ill that the doctors had any hesitation in advising the Empress that it would be safe to leave her sister. In Savoy she had one telegram which worried her but which did not seem serious. But while Eugénie, in city after city, was being fêted and admired, the sister was growing mysteriously weaker in the hotel in the Champs Elysées where, a few months before, the Empress had given a ball which was one of the most brilliant seen even in the Paris of the Second Empire.

It was on the morning of September 18, 1860, that the sovereigns landed at Algiers. They gave Eugénie

¹ Unpublished letter in Palacio de Liria.

no good news from the Hôtel d'Albe, and she looked out on the blazing scene with a sick heart. A fearful sirocco was blowing, and the *Cent Gardes* in their brilliant uniforms found it stifling. They felt they were being roasted alive in their breastplates like meat on the plates of an oven. Exhausted by the heat, and by her inner foreboding, the Empress forced herself to face the ceremonies with appreciation. Africa was doing its best for her ; on the blue seas the ships flew all the pennants for the salute, and the whole French army in Africa paraded before them. The Bey of Tunis came to do them homage. Between Algiers and the Maison Carrée, twelve miles away, they witnessed the same sumptuous diversions as had been already prepared for the Duc d'Aumale and for the Archduke Maximilian of Austria. Even before they had landed, the Duchess had already died. The news was kept from Eugénie as long as possible. But before she attended the last ceremony—which was to lay the foundation stone of the Boulevard leading to Bab Azoun—she had heard it. When she saw two clergy coming forward with the cross, she sobbed aloud.¹

The thought of the contrast between her triumph and her sister's final sufferings filled her with horror, and she sailed back to Marseilles prostrate with her grief. At first she had shown it in a passion of tears and cries. It was the first time that the Court had seen how strongly she could be moved, and those who thought she had no heart were astounded. "If you knew," she wrote to the Countess Tascher de la Pagerie on her return to Paris, "of all that I have suffered in the last weeks, of my constant anxiety during the voyage, and of my stay in Africa ; and at last to come back and find only the empty house,

¹ Du Barail : *Memoirs*.

without even the consolation of an embrace of her poor body, that will give you a little idea of what one pays for high positions on earth. One reaches them often by trampling on one's heart. I went over it gloomily with myself. I wonder if worldly advantages are worth the trouble one takes to keep them." ¹

On arriving at Paris, she had rushed to her brother-in-law. Then orders were given that the body of the Duchess should be moved from the Madeleine to the Church at Reuil beside the tombs of Josephine and Hortense. Then it was sent to Madrid. "*En voyant emporter le corps de ma sœur,*" wrote the Empress, "*il me semblait qu'on arrachait mon âme.*" ² (25)

12

When sorrow first pierced the Empress, those who knew her constitution waited for the reaction. It first strung her nerves to the highest tension, so that she became obsessed by a new political anxiety.

As a result of the Italian campaign which gave Napoleon Savoy, the conflict between Victor Emmanuel and the Papal States had become acute. Napoleon had already made up his mind that to administer the civil government by priests was incompatible neither with the liberty of the people nor with the religious dignity of the Church. With a foresight which reached almost as far as the Lateran Concordat of 1929, he inspired a paper, published by La Ferronnière, which reserved for the Holy See independence without more than a minimum of territory. The whole city of Rome, with its long traditions of Catholic culture, was to frame the dignity of the Holy Father. But to Pio Nono himself the

¹ Tascher de la Pagerie : *Mon Séjour aux Tuileries.*

² Unpublished letter in Palacio de Liria.



*[From the portrait by Winterhalter in the
possession of the Duke of Alba]*

THE DUCHESS OF ALBA

proposal seemed almost sacrilege, and Eugénie though, as she rightly insisted, she was not clerically minded, clung conservatively to the old ideas of extended temporal power. She flatly denied that the Emperor had any association with the pamphlet of La Ferronnière. "The Empress is furious with the pamphlet,"¹ wrote the Austrian Ambassador, and the fury had developed when, on her return from Algiers, she was with the Emperor at St. Sauveur in the Pyrenees. It not infrequently happens that people with the energy of highly strung nerves find a release from sorrow, and ward off its exhaustion, in a violent preoccupation with something else. The Catholic religion had to her sad heart become a closer reality; in her tense mood she felt with sinister distinctness that Providence would visit judgment on any one who supported a robber of the Holy Father; as a woman, she detested Victor Emmanuel; she had furthermore, owing to his Minister's intrigues, the intimate annoyance of Castiglione. The first sign that her system—after so much excitement and such heaviness of mourning—was overwrought was that her mind became tormented by these ravenous ideas. The habit of them enslaved, and then goaded to fierce activity, her passionate imagination. Self-control was leaving her, and she frequently rounded on Napoleon. The noise of scandal was everywhere. When, on November 14, she started on a visit to the Duchess of Hamilton in Scotland, it echoed through France to other Courts. "Eugénie's expedition," wrote King Leopold to Victoria, "is most astonishing. She also coughs much, and I never heard Scotland recommended for winter excursions. I believe that the death of her sister affected her a good deal. She seems to have

¹ December 23, 1859. Unpublished.

been a good deal *choquée* that she had been dancing in Africa when that poor sister was dying. Next to this there seems a difference of opinion with her master on the subject of the Pope.”¹ Some, not content with discussing her differences with the Emperor, thought that she was dying of the same disease as the Duchess of Alba, and wanted a private consultation with an Edinburgh doctor. But the reason, for those who knew what she had been through, was simple enough. For those whose powers of endurance have been overstrained, so that imagination becomes, if not a rebel to a fact, so frenzied in its fight with evil that the system which joins body to mind is jarred, it is idle to talk of will or even common sense. The one cure is movement, distraction, change : they are the only means of rest. The reason for Eugénie’s hurried journey was relief for a sad and weary heart.²

13

She fled incontinently. In the strictest incognito, of which she sent a hurried warning to Victoria, she set out for London on November 14, taking with her only Madame de Montebello, Madame de Saulcy, M. Favé, and the Marquis de la Grange. Omitting even to order apartments in London, she had on arrival to drive to five hotels before she could find rooms. The Emperor was delighted when he heard this, and roared with laughter.

On December 4 the Queen wrote to King Leopold that she had seen the Empress, who was now in London again, on her way back from Hamilton. She came to the Palace for lunch and stayed till three. She seemed better for her journey ; except

¹ *Queen Victoria’s Letters*, 1st series.

² Tascher de la Pagerie : *Mon Séjour aux Tuileries*.

for a certain shyness, her manner was the same as usual.¹ Victoria noticed that in her beauty there was sadness ; and when she spoke of her health and her return from Algiers she began to cry. She never mentioned the Emperor except to offer his compliments, and to politics she made no allusion whatever. "It is all very strange," was the comment of the Queen. The Empress returned delighted with England and took up her old ways once more.²

14

For years the struggle went on between Napoleon and Eugénie over the rights of the Pope. As Lord Clarendon saw, the Emperor had a real responsibility. Without the clericals, as King Leopold insisted to Victoria, he could never have had the throne : why give them up for revolutionaries ? "If the Pope was murdered or went into exile on the withdrawal of the French troops," Lord Clarendon himself wrote to Lord Cowley, "he (the Emperor) would be held responsible for it, and justly so, by the whole Catholic world and by every man, woman, and child in France who is, or pretends to be, religious. He could not afford to run such a tremendous risk, and it is not altogether unnatural that he should think rather of himself, his dynasty and his country, than the unification of Italy and the pleasing of Lord Palmerston." The Empress, as we saw, felt this with the fatal convictions of overwrought nerves : and the weaker the Pope's chance became the more violent was her insistence. She rated even the Portuguese Minister at the Tuileries when she heard that his King was to marry another daughter of Victor Emmanuel.

¹ Unpublished letter of Lord Clarendon.

² Unpublished letter from Lord Cowley to Lord John Russell.

By the summer of 1862 the Austrian Ambassador announced that she had become mistress of the situation. She had read in the *Moniteur* a note which she regarded as a slap in the face to Prince Napoleon, and had seen a letter from the Emperor to Victor Emmanuel, in which the Emperor promised never to abandon the Pope to his enemies. Walewski became her strong ally in the campaign. "I regard it as a triumph for the Empress," wrote Metternich on June 7, 1862, "to have induced the Emperor to renounce any request for Utopian concessions from the Holy Father. . . . She seems radiant and believes the battle is won." ¹

The accommodations between Italy and Austria were too complicated, however, for Napoleon to settle so easily. The argument continued fierce between the sovereigns, and in the end there was open gossip about a separation; but in 1864, according to Lord Cowley, they finally agreed by Eugénie promising no more scenes, and he that the Pope would not be abandoned. It was not before she declared that if the Pope were forced to leave Rome, she would follow him wherever he might go, as the only mark of respect she could still show to her child's godfather.

"I think," wrote Lord John Russell when he heard this, "that if the Empress is to follow the godfather of her child, the father of her child will have some reason to complain. He might fairly sue for a divorce before the Council of State." ²

Napoleon III suing the immaculate Eugénie for adultery, with Pio Nono as co-respondent! Who but an Englishman could have so original a mind?

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

² *The Paris Embassy.*

V

THE GRASP OF POWER

C'est de la force, et la force partout où elle se rencontre, parait à son avantage au milieu de la faiblesse universelle qui nous environne. (26)

A. DE TOCQUEVILLE : *Lettres*.

I

THE estrangement between the Emperor and the Empress grew more definite in every year after the Prince's birth. After that she had been forced, at the instance of the doctors, to close to him the door of her bedroom. Extremely annoyed with the Castiglione episode, she had had to cope with the endless train of her husband's mistresses. Yet it was noticed that in his way of touching the Empress, Napoleon's flesh seemed to speak louder than his heart,¹ and this in such circumstances, with such a temperament as hers, could hardly have made things easier for her. It is likely that his presence gradually awoke in her a strong distaste, and that this was intensified by the advances of the disease which finally destroyed him. He was becoming the victim of a disorder of the kidneys, which caused not only stone in the bladder, but his whole system to be affected by the poison of uric acid. The effects were, of course, not merely physical; they were still more marked upon his nerves and mind, which were exhausted by recurring paroxysms of physical torture. After his return from Italy it was noticed that he was more and more

¹ Barthez : *La Famille Impériale*.

absorbed in his hidden thoughts. He would remain whole days without speaking, and his tendency to look on men as tools rather than as companions was gradually becoming a withdrawal from their society into torpor. "*Calme et profondément dissimulé, même pour ceux qu'il a le plus dans son intimité, son âme est marbre comme sa figure,*" (27) so wrote Viel Castel.¹ Morny and Persigny still lived, the Empire pursued its course of commercial prosperity, but Napoleon's grip was growing loose.

In the Empress, on the other hand, the regency of 1859 had evoked a latent energy. Even in 1856 Baroche had described her as the most influential of Napoleon's Ministers. When she had proposed to say to the Council, "Your collaboration will help me in the accomplishment of tasks too heavy for hands so incapable as mine," the Emperor insisted that the last phrase was too false to be left standing. "The Empress," wrote Baroche,² "has admirably discharged her functions as regent: the careful attention she gave to the discussions, the shrewdness of her judgment, not less than the distinction of her bearing, so much impressed the Ministry that, at the urgent request of the members, she continued to be present at the meetings of the Council, even after Napoleon's return."

Since then the central lady of the Court had become a mother, and the mother had governed the country over which her son was to reign. Motherhood reawakened the intellectual passions which in her youth, and even in her childhood, she had inherited from the Countess of Montijo. Coquettish ever, she was now much more than the coquette. Her phenomenal nervous energy, which had always

¹ December 16, 1859.

² May 10, 1859. Cf. *Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1892.

evoked either admiration or resentment, was now concentrated on practical ends. An instinct for politics, an experience of them, a knowledge of the men in power about her, a sharp sense of fact as well as of principle, and a mind of amazing vitality and speed, now began to play upon the politics of Europe as lightning agitates wires. And what an ocean was now open to the spreading sails of her diplomacy ! The royal families of Europe met her on equal terms : the throne she sat on had become that of the arbiter of Europe, and she took up the map of Europe to remake it.

2

Her ideas of her rôle were governed by her Spanish training. A Spanish Catholic, she would, as we saw, go to any length to defend the rights of the Holy See ; a Spanish Royalist, she listened to men from Mexico who wanted to see the vast expanses of their country linked with the thrones of Europe : a *grande d'Espagne*, she turned to ally herself with royal families rather than with the people. But these loyalties had to be accommodated with the liberalism which was an instinct with the Emperor, and which was inherent in the absolutism of the Bonapartes. The Empress was never popular with any of his entourage. Persigny was deeply hostile to her ; Prince Napoleon detested her ; Morny, who was really the power which upheld him, distrusted her. Yet she held her own, and little by little asserted more and more her own enterprise and her own decisions.

She found the support she needed in the new Austrian Ambassador. Prince Richard Metternich, although little of a statesman, was not unworthy of his great inheritance. Wealth, social eminence, and an historic name were supported by much shrewd

judgment and calm temper. His manners were exquisite, his face fine, and his presence both easy and impressive. His large frame added to the impression of largeness in the expression of his heart and mind. He had been in the Paris Embassy under Count Hübner. When he returned as Ambassador in 1859, he had married Countess Pauline Sandor, who was in her way as remarkable as he. Before she married him her Maygar temperament had found outdoor sports to her taste : she brought to Paris the wildness of her blood and a suggestion of the monkey in her face, to give an air of whimsicality to the most gorgeous of Embassies ; for though she was no beauty, she combined with her spontaneity a commanding air of distinction. Her well-hung carriage, drawn by four magnificent horses, with the princely coronet over her coat-of-arms, became as well known as the Empress's own : her bewildering variety of striking dresses (for it was she who created Worth), the turbulence of her self-expression in vagary and talk, her brilliant eyes, and the pleasantness of her expression drew attention past her thick lips, her rather Jewish nose, or the lack of line in the contours of her face.¹ She was a triumph of what is called personality, supported by every gift, certainly of wealth and rank. She typified indeed all that was brilliant and bizarre in the Tuileries. She cultivated Wagner and mocked Mathilde.

The moment she and the Empress met, the two accomplished sportswomen recognised the sympathy between them. It was in Biarritz, in 1859. The Empress, attended by her suite, walked up to the hotel where the Metternichs were staying and asked for them. The Princess ran down to meet the Empress, who was wearing a short black silk skirt

¹ Loliée : *Femmes du 2de Empire*.

looped up all round, and a red flannel shirt blouse. She held a stick in one hand and in the other a green parasol. She struck the Princess at once as an accomplished woman of the world. She spoke with such ease and animation, such naturalness and simplicity and charm, that in a short time the Ambassadors felt that she had known her all her life. Here was something different from, and more than, a royalty : here was a great lady of commanding wit and charm and beauty. Her nose, her mouth, the oval of her face, the shape of her head, her neck and shoulders struck the Princess as perfect, and in her blue eyes there was a winning mildness, even while they sparkled with intelligence. The Empress, too, was won by the whimsical Ambassador of the country and the Court which always had had, and always was to have, her sympathy.¹

While the Empress found in Princess Pauline a kindred spirit both of sport and of distinction, to whom she could confide her troubles as a woman, she would fly through tense years to Prince Richard rather to discharge the electricity of an amazing mind than to seek his prudent counsel. He thoroughly relished the opportunity, and with consummate tact remained in a position of confidence which opened up Napoleon's intentions as well as Eugénie's to the Austrian Court, while giving her the support of an intimate but deferential friendship. They were still living in an age when the balance of power was the one obsession of diplomacy, and when in turn with developing nationalism the alliance of states, made to no small extent by the sovereign or by one powerful Minister, still took the place in a country's welfare which is now reserved for finance in its hold over commerce and industry.

¹ Princess Pauline Metternich : *Geschenes, Gefahrenes, Erlebtes*.

3

Metternich had not long made friends with Eugénie before he discovered that her dearest project was to establish an Empire in Mexico. Some years before she had resumed her acquaintance with the Spanish diplomat, José Hidalgo, who was a friend of her mother's, and who took it upon himself to represent the Mexican Royalists. She invited him to Compiègne, to Fontainebleau, and to Biarritz, and confided to him the care of the Duchess of Alba's body on its last journey to Spain. Young and elegant, with a gentleness of manner very appealing to women, Hidalgo had made an impression on Doña Eugenia in Madrid. As she saw him on her way from Biarritz to a bull-fight at Bayonne in 1857, she at once recalled him, and, always delighted to have a Spaniard for company, to talk her own dear language to her, she invited him to join her on her yacht next day. He seized his opportunity. What a magnificent idea, would it not be, he asked, to set up a Latin and Catholic monarchy in Mexico and save so much of the New World from Protestantism and democracy? To do this, and to give back to an immense country order and peace; to do this for the Second Empire, which would then find in it the commercial support which India has been to England, was a great idea, one of the greatest ideas of the reign, and the Empress did not stop to criticise it. She distrusted the American States, and their "*prétention de mise républicaine*." The idea of a Mexican Empire took complete possession of her rapid and excitable mind, and she soon won the Emperor over. But the matter did not move much further till September 1861.

The French sovereigns were then again at Biarritz, and Hidalgo was with them. Meanwhile the

American Civil War had temporarily disposed of the Monroe Doctrine, and England had become favourably inclined to the idea of safeguarding her financial interests in Mexico. The question was to find a candidate for the new throne. Napoleon had even thought of the Duc d'Aumale : German and Spanish princes had been considered, but none were suitable. Hidalgo had another idea : supported by the rich Mexican, Gutierrez, who had married a Lutzow of Vienna, Hidalgo mentioned the possibility of an Austrian Archduke.

" But which Archduke ? " asked Eugénie.

" I believe the Archduke Rainer was spoken of."

" Yes," said the Empress, " for the Archduke Max would not be willing."

Hidalgo and Napoleon chimed an answering " No."

There was silence for some moments. Then the Empress suddenly struck her breast with her fan. " Well," she exclaimed, " I have a presentiment that he will accept." She took Hidalgo to Walewski, who was now disposed to agree, and from that time on the idea of the Mexican Empire was dominant in her ambition. The movement could only develop slowly, but it had a fatal persistency. And now in one way, now in another, she led it on to the consummation which became identified with her ruin.

The offer of Mexico soon fascinated Maximilian, and if he had hesitated he would have been drawn to it by Charlotte, who was as feverish and impetuous as Eugénie, without her resilient power. Her eyes were dazzled by the prospect of the crown of the Aztecs flashing to her across the ocean. As a Coburg, she came of a family which had a gift for obtaining crowns. Her father, King Leopold I of Belgium, was attracted by the idea and attempted to win over his

niece, Victoria. Of all this Eugénie was aware, and made her calculations accordingly. Much depended on the attitude of England. She had been occupied with that very soon after she conceived her plan. So she wrote to Metternich on February 1862 :

“ MY DEAR PRINCE,—

“ I have just heard that Lord Derby is thinking of asking a question in Parliament on the affairs of Mexico. If, by means of the King of the Belgians, we could prevent it, it would be very useful, for the less one talks of it, the better it will be. It is simply a Parliamentary string, which means perhaps to Lord Derby nothing more than an opportunity to embarrass the Government without having any particular regard for Mexico itself. We ought to try and stop a discussion about it if we can.

“ It would be easy to get Beyens to say it to the King, and perhaps one could save that by simply writing a letter. I write these few words in haste.

“ *Croyez, mon cher Prince, à tous mes sentiments affectueux.*
EUGÉNIE.”

The plan had succeeded. King Leopold had given the hint to Queen Victoria, and the Empress's diplomatic move succeeded.¹

In 1863 she went from Biarritz to Madrid to press the idea on Queen Isabella. She secured a personal triumph in the Court which, fifteen years before, she had been obliged to leave. It was noticed that the Countess of Montijo, sitting opposite to her at a royal banquet, saw neither what to eat nor to drink,

¹ Count Corti : *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*, from which almost all of these passages are taken.

but crumbled a piece of bread through the whole meal, while her fascinated gaze was fixed upon her daughter. The Queen, however, was not pleased that the new Imperial crown was not to come to her own house, and the most that could be obtained from Spain was neutrality.

Early in March 1864 Maximilian and Charlotte had paid a visit to Paris, where they were received with the highest honours and appeared to be full of enthusiasm for their Mexican future. But warned by Metternich, by the Emperor of Austria, and by his brother Ferdinand, Max hesitated and withdrew. In March 1864, it looked as though the great plan had failed. On the 27th of the month, Metternich went to see the Empress. "*Elle a une grande responsabilité dans cet affaire,*"¹ (28) he wrote to Count Mülinen. She was in a state of feverish impatience at anything breaking in upon her plan—indeed actually in tears. Although at first unable to rouse her from what he called this *grande prostration*, Metternich was woken at two the next morning to receive one of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, who handed him this letter :

"MY DEAR PRINCE,—

"I have just received Hidalgo's answer. The Archduke has decided to decline with thanks the Mexican deputation, and to set out at once for Rome in order to leave Austria and abandon his dreams.

"I say nothing of the appalling scandal that this will cause to the House of Austria, but, as regards ourselves, you must admit that there can be no excuse, whatever obstacles may have arisen, on one side or the other ; the fact is that

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

you have had time to weigh everything, and to think it well out, and now that the loan has been raised, and the agreements signed, it is no time to bring up a petty family matter compared with the confusion into which you throw so many people. To hand us your ultimatum is no joke. Kindly inform your Government this very evening.

“*Croyez à ma mauvaise humeur bien justifiée,*
“EUGÉNIE.”

The French sovereigns again set hard to work, the Emperor appealing to the Archduke's honour. By April 9 Maximilian had accepted the proposals of Gutierrez and Hidalgo : and Napoleon had pledged his support to the new Emperor.

In May, after a visit to the Pope, Maximilian and Charlotte set sail for Mexico. While they faced their task, now with enjoyment of the beauty, and now with apprehension at the barbarism, of their country, and attempted the impossible task of ordering its finances and administration, Eugénie watched with eager eyes the progress of the sumptuous adventure, and would talk for hours to French officers who returned. A French army, under Bazaine, supported Maximilian who was now imbued with the Napoleonic idea of a liberal Empire. The task before him was gigantic, but the more gigantic the more exhilarating it seemed ; scenery, vegetation, and climate were all so good that it seemed to Maximilian and Charlotte in their happier moments as though they were to reign in a Garden of Eden. There were many shocks, however. On their first night in the Palace at Mexico City, for example, devouring insects made their beds like hot cinders to them, and the new Emperor finished his rest on a billiard table.

Eugénie heard most of this both by letters from the sovereigns and from conversation with King Leopold. Gutierrez and Hidalgo, however, moved through Paris triumphant, Gutierrez still continuing to write long letters in a reactionary and ultramontane tone to Maximilian—letters which were in no way in harmony with the ideas of the French sovereigns.

“One ought not to surround oneself with old portraits and pictures,” Eugénie had said in the autumn of 1863 to Gutierrez. “I mean, not to live in a world which does not really exist.”

“We ought,” said Gutierrez, “to have a dictatorship on the pattern of that established in France, and everywhere else.”

The Empress retorted angrily, “Yes, but a dictatorship which should bring liberty, and a man able to maintain them side by side.”

But this vindication of the Second Empire hardly seemed to a reactionary to apply to Mexico: “As for liberty,” answered Gutierrez, “we have had only too much of that, unfortunately without finding a dictator of the desired ability.”¹

It was not until 1865 that Eugénie began to realise how impossible the situation in Mexico was becoming, and how fatally it might react upon herself. There are those who

Wrest the stars from their concurrences,
Hew time unto the likeness of themselves,
And force the virgin hours,

only to find that their choice was out of tune with circumstance, and that just inasmuch as their own wills were their fate—no more—they had become the vassals of disaster.

¹ Count Corti : *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*.

Meanwhile the mind of the Empress was crowded with the scheme of European diplomacy. When she had married, there were but four great Powers in Europe—Russia, Austria, France, and England. With England, the Empire had remained on comparatively good terms, and Russia, after the Crimea, seemed far away. Against Austria there had been war to make Italy into a Power; but that had been amicably settled, except for the question of Venetia. Meanwhile, Bismarck was consolidating Germany: so that the French Empire saw arising on its flank two nations, each of which might become a menace. Judged by the standards of the old diplomacy, it was the weakness of Napoleon's policy, as we have seen, that he created a potential enemy in Italy, and did not quickly hem in the militarist power of Prussia. His liberal instincts were too strong for his patriotism; in both him and the Empress, generous ambitions for other nations were liable to conflict with their own French interests: of the danger of this Mexico was to show the world a tragic example.

The first idea which Eugénie developed with Napoleon was the idea of a triple *entente* of France with England and Austria. These three Powers might, she thought, reconstruct the frontiers fixed by the Congress of Vienna. The Polish insurrection of 1863 had woken tense excitement in Europe, the Liberals sympathising with it as a revolt against tyranny, the Catholics because of Poland's Church. For once Italy and Austria, for once Prince Napoleon and the Empress were in agreement. On February 21 she discussed the situation for three hours with Metternich. She wanted, she said, to throw her cap over the windmills and speak out her whole mind.

"You may think I am mad if you want to," she said, "but that doesn't matter." "Are these more idle dreams?" he asked. "I may be more fanciful than men," she answered, "but the interests of my adopted country, of my husband, and of my son are too close to my heart for me to risk deceit in speaking of the future." Could she have a map, she would take him with her over Europe *au vol d'oiseau*. "*Quel vol et quel oiseau!*" (29) he wrote in his despatch to Vienna, not a little curious to accompany the sovereigns on such a flight. The plan was to remodel Europe, to include an independent kingdom of Poland; Russia was to be compensated in the East; Austria was to give Venetia to Italy, but to take Southern Germany and the Eastern Adriatic; Italy was to leave the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples intact; Prussia was to hand Silesia to Austria, and could extend as far as the Main; Turkey was to be suppressed, and France to have the left bank of the Rhine.¹

This talk, illuminating as it was, went far beyond what was in the immediate designs of any one, even of the Empress herself. She had indeed thrown her cap over the windmills. *What was taken as the preparation for national aggression was the idea of the two sovereigns to make a new basis of balance of power in Europe in which, naturally, France was to be as strong as possible and where she should be the ally of a powerful Austria.* On March 2 the Empress complained to Metternich in a letter that their talk had been too vague and disjointed. She was convinced that the time had come to act there when the Polish question had aroused general agitation. If they delayed, she wrote, what would be left of their plan of common action but dreams and chimeras? It made her think of two

¹ V.N.A. Published in Professor Oncken's *Die Ursprünge des Kriegs von 1870*.

pleasure trips starting around the world, one too early and one too late, without a means of coming together. "And yet," she added, "when I think of all that there is great, and even practical, in the waking dream we have shared together, I feel inclined to burst into tears, and knock my head against the wall."

"If events had *your temperament*," she went on, "I should not worry, one would have time to put everything in order. But alas, they move even more quickly than I, and that is the whole point. We were saying the other day that your country's luck is proof against everything. Mistakes heaped on mistakes have often, and I would say *always*, been repaired by a providence which watches over you. '*Le bonheur vient en dormant*,' (30) says the proverb, but another says 'God helps those who help themselves.' What a grand future arises before you! And to think that you will not stretch out your hand to take it, or that you will do it too late. For those who dream like me of a *sincere and lasting* alliance with you, when each will play his part—a part in sacrifice as in advantage—I admit that it costs me something to give it up." ¹

Were they not agreed on the question of Germany, and was not that in itself immense? Was not Austria offered a compensation for every possible sacrifice? "You call me too impatient," she wrote, "and it is true, but an *entente* with you has always been what I have most desired. '*Le mariage d'inclination c'est vous : ne nous faites pas faire un mariage de raison*.'" ¹ (31)

The point which Eugénie illustrated from the story of her own heart was made by Napoleon in December from the crude story of his: "*Jusqu'à présent je n'ai eu que des maîtresses : je cherche une femme*." ¹ (32)

¹ Unpublished MS. in V.N.A.

Drouyn de Lhuys, who shared the predilection of the Empress for Austria, thought this similitude sublime.

5

While Napoleon negotiated prudently with Austria, asking only for pledges of her confidence, Eugénie, whose impatience made her in Metternich's expression "all fire and flame," pushed him beyond the courtesies of diplomacy. Her excitement, he confessed to Rechberg, made him beside himself. "What you want above all," he said to the Empress, "is to be able to make a proclamation to the French in which you will say you have obtained by your cleverness what your arms could not win: Italy free to the Adriatic, no more disagreeable quadrilateral to stop the most powerful army in the world; Poland reconstituted at the expense of the treaties of 1815; the Rhine a French river. If Austria still exists after that is a matter of little account."¹

The Empress was not pleased, but she almost confessed that such was the object of her dreams. In a voice of such deep conviction that he was touched, she concluded: "If Austria helps us to fulfil the smallest part of this programme, she will see one day in history what is the gratitude of a nation like ours, and of a man like the Emperor." On March 8 she sent him the draft of an alliance, offensive and defensive, between the two countries.²

In the meantime, other schemers had been at work. With England, Austria, and Germany all planning to cut Poland from the Russian Empire and so put a barrier between Russia and Prussia, the Czar had naturally been intensely irritated. He went to a

¹ V.N.A. Published in Professor Oncken's book.

² This item is unpublished.

new coronation in Warsaw and made it plain that he intended to stand no nonsense there.¹ "*Point de rêveries, Messieurs !*" (33) was the burden of his speech at Warsaw. Bismarck saw his opportunity, and by maintaining friendship with Alexander, when every one else seemed aggressive, had made a friend on his eastern frontier who would leave him free for aggression on the others. This *entente* was formalised in the Gortschakoff-Alvensleben agreement of 1863.²

6

Meanwhile he had prepared to ally with Austria for an attack on Denmark. Metternich, therefore, was obliged to withdraw from his political intimacies with the Empress, who on November 13 of that year complained that she hardly recognised his writing, so long was it since she had seen it. Her patience had been tried by the long months in which the chances she saw to be so dynamic had been slipping by. "You know," she wrote, "how intensely I detest all which fails to reach a definite conclusion : so in seeing an open road in front of my eyes, I feel quite different from being in this impasse where we were jammed together, and where one might well have sung our song :

*Ils étaient trois, qui voulaient
Se battre."* (34)

She complained that the Austrians had left them in complete ignorance for five months while nothing had been done. "*Vous le savez mieux que personne,*"³

¹ La Gorce : *Histoire du Second Empire*.

² Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

³ V.N.A. Unpublished. "You know better than anyone that the Emperor has desired loyally to go forward with you : but go forward indeed you must."

l'empereur a désiré loyalement marcher avec vous, mais enfin il fallait marcher." The ineptitude of Austria at that time was to ruin both countries : the Empress with Drouyn de Lhuys saw it, and was to see it with increasing clearness. She complained again justly that while the Austrians might have made a fruitful alliance to accomplish great things, they, thinking only of themselves and their own temporary advantage, had lost the opportunity and become unjust to the French. "*L'Empereur veut la paix et on lui reproche de vouloir sans cesse la troubler, il n'a pas d'ambition, et pourtant tous vos journaux lui reprochent de chercher les prétextes pour s'emparer du Rhin. Mais il est sans ambition pour ce qui regarde une extension de territoire, [mais] il ne saurait être assez jaloux de l'influence de la France. La guerre de Crimée nous a coûté assez cher pour qu'elle nous rapporte du moins à être écoutés ; le silence eut pu être digne et utile même à la Pologne, jusqu'à un certain point, mais nous avons eu ni honneur ni projet dans notre campagne diplomatique. Esperons donc des lumières d'un congrès ce que nous n'avons pu obtenir, et s'il n'aboutit pas, que chacun prenne devant l'Europe la part de responsabilité qui lui revient tout entière.*"¹ (35)

This was the letter of a political mind of extraordinary acumen. Combining the ideals of freedom with the far-sighted shrewdness of a patriot, it did indeed propose a scheme by which the traditional sympathies of the Empress softened and enriched the designs of the Bonapartes. The ability of Bismarck on the one side, the apathy of Austria and of England on the other, prevented the attainment of Eugénie's designs. But the Congress was an excellent idea : it would have saved calamitous wars, and the armed

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished. It need not be pointed out that this quotation, which was omitted by Professor Oncken in his book, gives the key to the situation.

tension of many decades. Furthermore, it exactly suited the mood of Napoleon, who was neither decisive enough nor unscrupulous enough ruthlessly to attempt by war what he felt should be won by the reasonable compromises of diplomacy.

Each day, however, carried Austria further from the idea of a Congress, and closer to an alliance with Bismarck, who found in *Il Principe* an exact account of how an ambitious patriot should act. The enthusiastic mind of the Empress was still pulsing with excitement and indignation when she entertained the Metternichs at Compiègne towards the end of November, and in an eloquent letter to Vienna in which Eugénie's vivid mind is picturesquely imaged, Prince Richard gave a vivid account of the talks they had together.

"The Empress," he wrote, "always an excellent barometer of what concerns the mood of the Emperor from moment to moment, has honoured me with several long interviews in which she gave way to her characteristic excitability."

She began by saying that if what was happening did not suit the Austrians, it was certainly their own fault, because it was they who—every day drawing back from the decisions on which they had agreed—had caused the decisions of the Emperor to change.

"I know you to the tips of the fingers," she said to Metternich. "You have never thought seriously of going forward—you want to gain time—it was very convenient for you to lean on our inaction and tie our hands—but what suits you so well no longer suits us. Don't blame any one but yourselves for what happens to you. I know also what you are going to do: instead of frankly approaching us—a task which will be hard work for everybody, but

where the most energetic will win the great advantage—you are going to hesitate. You give yourself to making a *mole's hill*, you make plots now on this side, now on that, and you will arrive at the tail of the whole procession. We know all that is going on, and we are worried only on your account ; for when one has made up one's mind, as we have, to sacrifice every ambition and every *arrière-pensée*, one arrives always at the end at combating and abjuring mistrust. You work up the German newspapers to be misleading in regard to us, but you will work in vain. The masses will be on our side, and the dynasties will have to follow them to rid themselves of greater risks.”¹

For a long time the Empress spoke in this tone. Never it seemed did the calm of Prince Metternich tell more on her nerves, for she finished by saying : “ Then does nothing move you ? ”

He answered that he knew her as well as she believed she knew the Austrians, and that he was astonished neither by her reproaches nor her arguments that they should abandon their reserves. Then gradually he dealt with all her reproaches, and spoke of the Congress from his own personal point of view. He brought forward every argument he could against what she claimed was a panacea, and finished by saying that, as far as it was concerned, Austria really had made up her mind.

“ We will do all we can to avoid a strain with you,” he said, “ for we never doubt that our *entente* with you and the continuance of friendly relations are a necessity to preserve peace and order. But we will not hesitate for a moment when it comes to defending our rights and our interests. We will do precisely

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished. Another of Professor Oncken's conspicuous omissions.

what in our place you would do : and if you claim that you would allow yourselves to be cut in pieces for a more or less unknown object, allow me not to believe it."

The argument went on and on : they could not find a basis of agreement on one subject or another. But the Prince insisted that the Austrians were on each point more reasonable than they seemed. At last the Empress dragged the Ambassador into the presence of Napoleon, and complained to them both together of the Metternichs' obstinate Austrian serenity.

The Emperor took it very quietly. "He may be right," said Napoleon, "and in any case, each man for himself. Why shouldn't we still get on together?"¹

Six weeks later the reason for Austrian hesitancy was apparent : she had been dragged by Prussia into an attack on Denmark. Bismarck had foiled, as he was to foil to the end, the peaceful diplomacy towards which France leaned after Napoleon's energy began to weaken. The Empress made it plain that she hoped that other nations would be drawn in, though she appeared at last to have washed her hands of Austria. "We no longer want to come to terms with you," she wrote to Metternich on January 19, 1864. And during the spring her tone was violent. It was not until July that she became more conciliatory. "If ever we have the happiness to give your Emperor a state reception here," she said, "I would put everything upside down to do him worthy honour." But considering the distrust and lack of sympathy Franz Josef seemed to feel for the

¹ V.N.A. Metternich from Compiègne, Nov. 23, 1863. Unpublished. Yet another conspicuous omission by Professor Oncken.

sovereigns of France, she was much afraid of dying before this pleasure could be hers.¹

7

Principles of loyalty and tradition, rather than a sense of the unity of Europe founded on principles of justice, commerce, and peace were what attached the Empress to the Papal States, as also to Naples. Her Catholicism was measured more by the sentiment of loyalty than by a great political philosophy. She was a rapid and instinctive woman of action, not a creative thinker. And what bound her to the Holy See bound her to Austria. As long as the other plans could not develop, the Empress had no mind to rob Austria of Venetia, which at that moment was as dear to the leaders of the Risorgimento as Naples or Rome; she had spoken with amazing frankness to Nigra, the Italian Ambassador, in 1862. On May 9, giving a dinner at the Trianon, she asked him to drink with Walewski to the success of their projects. For Nigra it was a thunderbolt, Walewski having no more sympathy with the Risorgimento than Eugénie. Metternich told her afterwards that he did not approve of this sort of joke, but, not easily to be counselled, she sent after dinner for the Italian.

"What do you want of me, M. Nigra?" she asked.

"I would like to make a request."

"The moment is badly chosen, but, at any rate, let me hear it."

"I would wish Your Majesty could lessen a little your hostility to us and use your influence with the Emperor to withdraw his troops from Rome."

The Empress was furious.

"I would rather quarrel with you than lend a hand

¹ Unpublished MS. in V.N.A.

to your brigandage. Ah, you want us to give in to you always and everywhere. You are insatiable. You call the faithful subjects of the King of Naples brigands. What do you call yourselves ? ”

Nigra's only answer was a stammer.

“ It is you who rob and steal from others,” she went on. “ You want us to follow your example. But listen—the day of vengeance will come. You will see growing in your bands your Mazzinis, your Garibaldis ; and the day you are strung up, I assure you I will not come to your aid.”

“ Really, Your Majesty is too unjust,” Nigra was moved to cry out, “ and in defence I will ask if the King is not doing in Naples to-day what the Emperor did in France yesterday.”

Eugénie was naturally in a fury : “ Don't say that to me. Don't compare the Emperor to your highway-man : the Emperor has robbed no one ; he found France abandoned, the throne empty, and he saved France, crushing people like you.”

Nigra took up his hat, leapt to his feet, and left her. She then turned to Metternich, half apologetic, explaining that she had been carried away by her hatred of the agent of Cavour.

But the quarrel was soon over. A year later Nigra was invited to Fontainebleau, and returned to the diplomatic charge. With the Empress and one of the ladies-in-waiting, whom he had won over, he went out on the Palace gondola over the little lake.

The lady-in-waiting asked him to sing a barcarolle. Nigra at once began one in which, hymning the graces and merits of the Empress, he sang the hope that it was she to whom Italy would be indebted for Venice.¹

¹ The words of this are in *Nigra : Cenni Biografici*, par A.M.

The Empress sharply interrupted the serenade. "These insinuations are distasteful to me," she cried out. "As long as I live, no pressure of this kind shall be put on Austria."¹

8

Sometimes the ceremonies of state offered her diversion. None was more bizarre than the arrival of ambassadors from the Orient. In 1857 the Siamese had sent to Queen Victoria an embassy of which Lord Clarendon sent an account to Lord Cowley, and which was doubtless retold in the Tuileries: "The creatures crawled on all fours the whole length of the Throne Room with their noses to the floor, and in that position the first Ambassador read a long address in Siamese. The Queen read an answer and then they all crawled backwards out of the room." The presents arranged around the room had been chosen with careful reference to what might be useful and agreeable to the Queen. Among them were a long trident, a three-tiered umbrella of gold brocade, a spittoon, a gold cigar case, a throne which was nothing other than a chair with a hole in the seat, an enamelled vase with a handle, for a use obviously similar, and similarly intimate; and there was also a pair of trousers.

The Siamese did not apparently reach the French Court till four years later. Mérimée, at Fontainebleau on June 24, was told that they were expected on the following Thursday, and apparently they had not changed their ways, for they were still to present themselves on all fours. "Some say that they lick the floor which has been previously powdered with sugar-candy," he wrote. "Our ladies hope that

¹ Unpublished MS. in V.N.A.

they will bring them a lot of beautiful things. I imagine that they will bring nothing at all, and they hope to take away a lot of beautiful things."

What the Siamese themselves felt was discovered in the following cipher telegram intercepted and decoded by the French Government :

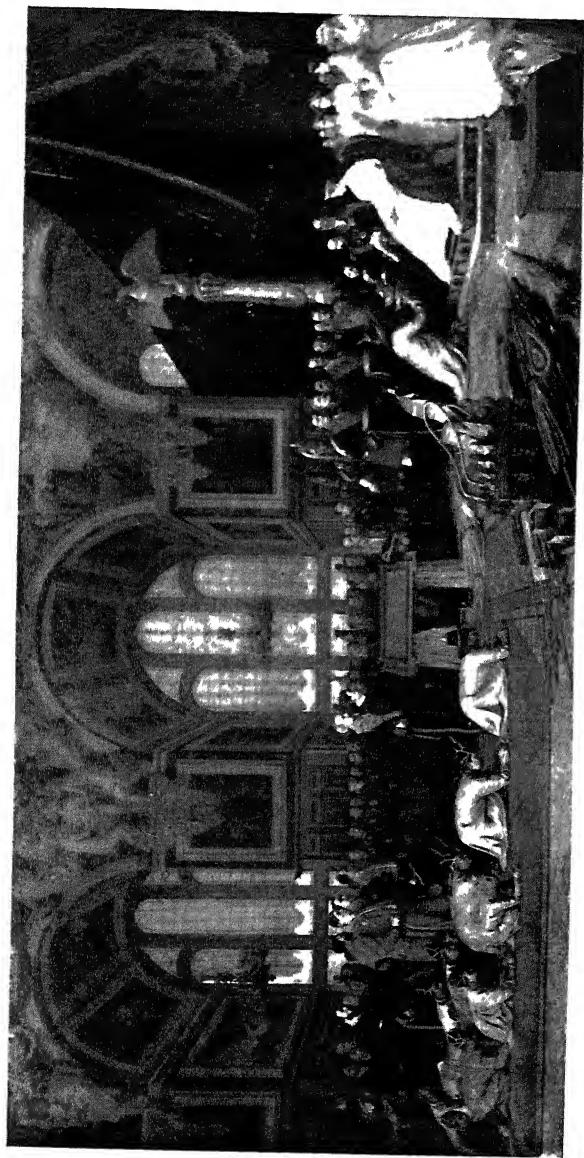
" This day, the seventh in the month of the rhinoceros, I, the undersigned first Ambassador, betook myself with my suite to the palace of the Emperor. The Emperor, accompanied by all his Sultanas, received us most politely. He was kind enough to don scarlet breeches and a baldric of the same colour to pay us quite peculiar honour, and he allowed his wife to appear in the costume of the interior apartments. So eager were they to come and meet us that they had forgotten to cover their shoulders. The principal of His Majesty's wives is to tell the truth a person of great beauty whose complexion appears a little tarnished in comparison with her teeth, which I would go so far as to say are like pearls. She wore upon her shoulders the Emperor's saddlecloth, for in spite of his might, this monarch has but a single elephant for his hunting and shooting, and is obliged to ride a horse." ¹

The Empress kept a copy of this dispatch till her death.

9

About this time she was much concerned with a new and vulgar amour of the Emperor's. Metternich wrote that he was much occupied with a woman of the basest sort, a woman whom he had installed at

¹ Unpublished MS. in the Palacio de Liria.



From the picture by Grosse at Versailles

THE SIAMSE AMBASSADORS AT THE COURT OF NAPOLEON III

Fontainebleau—a woman who, others rumoured, was in the pay of Bismarck—Marguerite Bélanger. Eugénie in her disgust made a tour in Germany ; but that, naturally, did not result in dividing Napoleon from his new mistress. When Eugénie came back to Compiègne, her feelings became too obvious for any one to ignore them. Some thought she would even ask for a separation, but that both her own pride and her care for her son forbade her to do. So fierce was her resentment, however, that it maimed her prudence, and, taking Mocquard, a *notaire*, she went off in a brougham to visit Bélanger, to denounce her, and to beg her, even to bribe her, to leave Paris. All this was known, and Lord Cowley even wrote it to Lord Clarendon, who answered : “ Spanish blood and Spanish jealousy have often begotten imprudences, but I never heard of such imprudence as the visit of Eugénie to Marguerite—it was certain to end in miserable failure, as the damsel would feel sure of better provision from the husband than the wife, and at the same time be able to give him a *preuve éclatante* of her disinterested love.” ¹

As the Empress viewed this as yet another example of Napoleon’s alienation from the Church, and the Walewskis were her supporters in defence of the Pope’s temporal power, she turned to confide her disgust in them. “ Do not suppose that I have not always been aware of this man’s infidelities,” she said. “ I have tried everything, even to make him jealous. It was vain, but now that he has sunk down to this *crapule*, I can stand it no longer.” ²

To make Napoleon jealous was not easy. He knew and respected the virtue of the Empress too well, and was too well assured of her interest in the throne

¹ Hon. F. A. Wellesley : *The Paris Embassy*.

² *Ibid.*

and her devotion to her son. And had he also not been aware always that she had her admirers? There were so many of them. There had been a young Spaniard who had lost his reason. There was Count Camerata, a kinsman of the Bonapartes, who shot himself in 1853. There was Caro, the celebrated scientific philosopher. There were Offenbach and Octave Feuillet. Strangest of all, there were the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Beust, and Graf von der Goltz, the Prussian Ambassador. "My poor Goltz," the Empress used to call him, and indeed when he saw that Bismarck's designs involved the ruin of the French Empire, he was in a terrible position. There is never once a reference to Eugénie in his despatches. Never impatient of a heart on fire for her, she felt for all of them a motherly and discreet solicitude. When Goltz was once seriously ill, she arranged for him to have a lodge in the park at Fontainebleau, and one summer evening, when the Empress and her suite were sitting by the lake, Goltz—more a shadow than a man—came to thank her. He could not bring himself to speak, but his eyes adored her.¹ The Empress, greatly agitated, welcomed him with the extremest kindness. Goltz, who died in 1869, wrote her a number of letters of respectful devotion which she treasured to her death. Only in one does he mention politics—written from Berlin in December 1868—in which he says that in spite of an absolute calm, he could not help noticing how all the German newspaper correspondents in Paris were working against the Emperor's interests, in a way calculated to mislead public opinion in Germany on the real state of affairs in France. The obstinate ill-feeling of certain French newspapers towards Germany

¹ Filon : *Memoirs of the Empress.*

naturally supported these tendencies. Whether Bismarck had, or had not, heard of this attachment is unknown ; but the force of the Empress's character impressed him, and not less her beauty. There was a curious sympathy between them, which went farther than their joint distrust of democracy, and with that magnanimity by which such a sympathy can overrule the witness of deeds she seemed to bear no grudge against Bismarck, even when he began patriotically to scheme for the ruin of her Empire. He had won her admiration when he first came to Biarritz in 1862.

10

Her married life for the last five years of the reign was an odd bargain between partnership and alienation. She found the adjustment in the force of her own character. The woman was lost in the sovereign. "Eugénie exists no more," Mérimée wrote to Panizzi. "There is but an Empress now. I mourn, and I admire." She could be regal, however, only to the extent that she kept the Emperor in harmony with her increasing control of affairs. Their relation, therefore, was obliged to continue close. But when disgust and contempt imbued it, though affection could remain, it was a business partnership, not a union of love—Eugénie's heart hardening into a firmer and firmer conviction of her own superiority from every point of view. And so things remained till 1871. They would not have remained so but for four elements in the Emperor's own character: his desire for emotional freedom, his physical weariness, his admiration for Eugénie, and his remarkable good nature. "I insist above all on effacing myself,"¹ she said to

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

Metternich ; but this was probably the sign of mental and physical strain. She had been thoroughly unnerved during the winter of 1864 over the Bélanger affair and lost her appetite. But she did not give in, and skating stimulated her. She made great progress on the lake in the Bois de Boulogne, and won a name for grace and distinction of movement. Nevertheless, each day on the ice saw her fall. The Emperor—sometimes supported by the American singer, Mrs. Charles Moulton—skated with the same assured calm that marked all his actions. Indifferent to the crowd, who ran, jostled, fell, picked itself up, and screamed around him, he went on the way he had chosen.¹

Eugénie's physical distraction was supported by a mental one : she worked out a scheme for the rights of the Latin and Greek churches at the Holy Sepulchre, a rivalry connected, as we have seen, with the Crimean War. Unseemly disputes had not only robbed worship of its dignity, but also made a complication between the French and Roman Governments ; the Empress, who combined her respect for the Pope and the dogmas of the Church with a surprising liberalism, thought that a reasonable accommodation amongst various Christian bodies would best settle the difficulty. What she suggested was to demolish the existing church at the Holy Sepulchre, and raise in its place a great temple with two lateral churches—one for the Catholics, one for the Orthodox,—keeping the central nave for worshippers of all denominations. The temple should be raised by universal subscription, supported in the first place by all Christian Princesses.

But complications soon arose. The Prussians were warned that support of the scheme would lead to

¹ Hegerburg Lindenkrone : *Memoirs*.

conflict with the Holy Sec.¹ Though Palmerston and the British Cabinet, according to the Foreign Secretary, warmly commended the project to Victoria as politically wise, there was misgiving somewhere. "The Queen won't have the Holy Sepulchre at any price," wrote Lord Clarendon to Lord Cowley.² But what the Queen herself wrote to the Empress was much more diplomatic :

"I cannot, Madame, but admire and respect the motives of Your Majesty : the desire to have constructed a new Church of the Holy Sepulchre—and if I feel obliged to submit the question to my Government, and consult my responsible advisers on the part I ought to take in this enterprise, I beg you to believe that I am doing all that is in my power to accede to the wishes of Your Majesty." ³

¹ Unpublished correspondence in Palacio de Liria.

² *The Paris Embassy*.

³ Unpublished MS. in Palacio de Liria.

VI

THE RIPENING OF DOOM

There is only one thing worse than making mistakes, and that is perseverance in correcting them.

LA GORCE.

I

ALTHOUGH the Emperor's hold of affairs was weakening, he had still at hand a strong adviser in the Duc de Morny, who gave him that tincture of ruthlessness and unscrupulousness which in the government of nations, alike in the East as in the West, wins for those who use it to face emergencies the name of a strong man. More than Persigny, more than any, Morny was the power behind the sovereign throne. His crest, an eagle rising from a bouquet of hortensias, with the motto "*Tace sed memento*," was a discreet reference to the fact that he was born of the liaison between Queen Hortense and the Comte de Flahault, and pointed to the likeness of his eyes and features to the Emperor's. He had also the Emperor's affability, but behind his easy finish of manner there was a reserve which hinted pride, and, in fact, egoism. There was no shrewder opportunist in France. He looked right through affairs to see how they might be used, and be used above all to his own profit. The founder of Deauville, he had a particular gift of foresight both financial and political. For he was wiser in his generation than the children of light. General du Barail wrote of

him as a man of marvellous adroitness and infinite skill, who hid under the manners of a *grand seigneur* the energy of a soldier. Not sufficiently conscientious in his choice of means, and too lacking in disdain of his own advantage to be a real patriot, he had that gift of efficiency which made people confident of his success. In Lord Cowley's terse words, he had it in him, if he had been honest, to have become a very great man.

At the beginning of the winter of 1864 he grew ill, and towards the end of the next February, his household realised that he was sinking. Alphonse Daudet, in *Robert Helmont*, has given a vivid account of the scene where financiers and monkeys, servants and hangers-on, crowded the Palace, some stricken to silence, some selfish enough to be restless as they debated the approach of death. The end came early in March. Accompanied by the Empress, erect in her black Spanish lace, Napoleon, as he climbed the stairs to his brother's death-bed, was shaken with sobs. When he was buried, the Duchesse de Morny, who was afterwards to marry the very Duque de Sexto whom the Empress had loved so long, cut off her curls and placed them in his coffin. One of Napoleon's mainstays had gone. He had lost the confidence of his consort and, for a year, he had seen a formidable military power rising in Prussia. To flee anxieties, he left in April for Algiers.

2

Gossip gave all sorts of reasons for the tour. Some said he wanted an excuse to flee the high temper of the Empress; some thought he merely wanted to enjoy Béranger undisturbed—there can be no doubt that she went also. It is possible that, as Eugénie

went to Hamilton in 1860, he really needed a change. But his departure awoke anxiety in Paris and even in London. There was no need for it. The Empress was again Regent, and she was more than equal to the task.

She was now a woman of thirty-eight, and had been getting for six years a firmer and firmer grip of politics. She showed remarkable tact and good sense in dealing with the business she had to superintend. She did not press her opinion against the majority of the council, and kept firmly on the side of conciliation. She so gave confidence to the whole country, and showed that without the presence of the Emperor she could assure order and tranquillity. The Regency had done great good.¹ Prince Metternich paid a tribute to the dignity and to the skill with which she had presided at the councils, and noticed her condolences with Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. She herself admitted to him that she had been deeply interested in her work, and that she was quite proud of having held the rudder so well. In her presence the ministers had perforce refrained from squabbling among themselves. "I have kept them so well under control," she said, "that I am almost sorry to let go the reins. I shall tell the Emperor that I hand him back a strong and united Government, and I shall beg him to take care not to hold the reins too loosely."² The Emperor for a time seemed to regain his decision. He took an extremely firm line with his cousin Napoleon who, on May 15, had made a mad speech at Ajaccio, giving his own revolutionary explanation to the programme of his uncle. The Emperor wrote him a strong rebuke and published it in the *Moniteur*. "The Emperor," wrote Metternich, "had estab-

¹ *The Paris Embassy*.

² Metternich. Despatch of June 10, 1865. Unpublished.

lished first in his family, then in his government, this severe discipline which admitted only one will and one action."¹

3

In the autumn of 1865, however, the winds blew up wild weather among the nations of Europe. On the one side it was seen that there was a power working for war between Austria and Prussia. The best Prussian spirits felt it to be almost treason: and it seemed doubtful if Bismarck could make expediency, ambition, and pitilessness weigh heavier than virtue and honour. But he worked steadily on: he had "thought things out in silent communion with God"²—the God, it is plain, of the old diplomacy. France, therefore, must decide either to be with him or against him. The prescience of Eugénie—aided by the counsels of Metternich—again ranged her with Austria, not only for the sake of the balance of power, but in the interests of Christian civilisation. But apart from the fact that the unification of Germany, like the unification of Italy, each one of the *Idées Napoléoniennes*, was undermining the position of France, the French sovereigns began to find themselves embarrassed by the turn of events in Mexico. Maximilian had now been there a year, but he could not master the country, even with the aid of Bazaine and a French army. The Indian Republican, Juarez, was still active. Furthermore, he was finding fresh support in New York and in Washington, now that the Civil War was over, and Johnson had succeeded Lincoln.³ All this was very disquieting for the

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

² Ludwig: *Bismarck*. English translation, p. 279

³ Corti: *Maximilian and Charlotte*, ii. 550. King Leopold also wrote direct to Eugénie, arguing that since the American War was over, there was no time to waste. Unpublished.

French sovereigns, who began to see that the Mexican adventure was not only robbing them of prestige, but left them encumbered in the tightening complications in Europe. Eugénie, who had once listened so eagerly to messengers from Mexico, became now rather inclined to bully those who brought disquieting news. It soon became impossible to pretend that the project could await final success, and rather than awaken the uncontrolled irritation of the Empress, returned officers kept away from her, realising that the less she heard of Mexico, the pleasanter for her and for themselves.¹ In the autumn of 1865 King Leopold died, and Napoleon lost also his strongest English supporter, Lord Palmerston.

The arrival of Bismarck at Biarritz in the autumn thrust in the face of the Government the ugly growth of possibilities, which were so far and obscure when Bismarck came three years before that the suggestion of a congress had seemed the answer to them. What did he want? No one could quite tell. His plan was really to seem to offer France every sort of advantage, while in reality she should be only so far compromised as to enter into no negotiations with Austria. Mérimée fixed his shrewd eyes on the massive figure, and wondered, though he was forced, like the Empress, to admire. "He is a big German; very courteous but not at all frank," wrote Mérimée. "He seems to be absolutely devoid of *gemüth* but full of wit. He has conquered me."² Mérimée's mocking eyes rested on the feet of Frau von Bismarck, feet which he thought must be the biggest beyond the Rhine: he saw a daughter walking in her mother's steps. Bismarck put down his own impressions still more tersely: he wrote that in France he had found

¹ Du Barail, iii. 7.

² *Lettres à une Inconnue*, cclxxxiv.

two amusing women, but not one man. The two women were Countess Walewski and the Empress, who was herself, as one of her own Ministers was to say, the *only man* in her Government.¹

It was at this point that the want of a man in Austria itself became fatal. Franz Josef lacked Napoleon's power to work out political schemes himself: what was graver, he could not (like the King of Prussia) find the man to do it for him. The old Prince Metternich had left no successors, and his son Richard, gifted as he was, was one of the new race of Ambassadors who are news correspondents or the messenger boys of leaders' instructions—given day by day in despatches, as they are now by telephone—rather than the old kind of masters of policy of whom England had, doubtless happily, seen the last in Lord Stratford at Constantinople. Had Austria had the power of energetic decision, France also would have been safe. Had even England foreseen the ultimate danger of the aggrandisement of Germany and spoken in time, all might have been well. As for Napoleon III, he believed that reserve was the most masterly tactics, and even though the next year was to change the face of Europe, so shrewd an observer as Lord Cowley was still to regard his policy as a success.

Bismarck returned therefore in the autumn to Berlin to prepare the Seven Weeks' War, which he began in the following summer. Napoleon dared not take the side of Austria for fear she should dominate the States of Southern Germany. He made the fatal mistake of encouraging an alliance between Prussia and Italy, in the hope of obtaining the Rhine in return, and the two Powers attacked Austria together later in June.

¹ Pierre Magne : *Revue Hebdomadaire*, June 20, 1914.

4

It was the Battle of Sadowa on July 3, 1866, after eight days of war, that rushed Paris to the need of decisions which would master the tragic pregnancy of time. Up to that moment Bismarck's designs, like a compressed spring, were restrained and hidden by caution. But at that moment, all men of foresight in Europe saw that they were at his mercy. Benedetti, hurrying to him from Berlin to discuss with him the proposals from Paris, remarked an extraordinary change. "The man whom he had first seen at Berlin, furiously attacked by his enemies, questioned or withstood by several of his friends, weighed down under the constraint of his responsibilities, he now found radiant with success, and henceforth superior to the uncertainty of fate."¹ It was useless to ask now for compensation in the direction of the Rhine. There was but one course open : to attack Prussia immediately. To this Vienna, and Richard Metternich, had been turning all their energies.² On the morning of July 5, there was a council at St. Cloud. Drouyn de Lhuys saw and argued that Prussia must at once be menaced with war. The Empress was inwardly convinced of it. Randon, the Minister of War, assured them that the army was ready : "that 80,000 men could be concentrated on the Rhine immediately, and 250,000 in twenty days."³ The Empress then, with feverish eloquence, pressed for the attack. She knew that the crisis had arrived, and on that day's decision hung the future of the Empire and the prospects of her son. Against the proposal of La Vallette that they should negotiate

¹ Pierre de la Gorce. *Histoire du 2de Empire*.

² V.N.A. Unpublished.

³ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

with Prussia, because of the alliance with Italy, her prescience was dynamic. She knew that once Bismarck had his army disencumbered again, he would not listen to a word of negotiations. In the force of her decision, Drouyn and Randon turned again to spur forward, and in the mesmerism of her presence Napoleon yielded to the decision of calling the Chambers together to vote supplies for mobilisation ; to march 50,000 men to the Rhine ; and to send a threat to Berlin. These decisions were to be published in the *Moniteur* next day.

But they were never published : the Emperor decided to ignore the Council. The rumour was that he had passed the night with B  langer. What is not rumour is that he had telegraphed to Prussia and to Italy, asking them to refrain from further aggression, while he acted as the mediator of the Peace.¹ In a few hours he had received from Italy an evasive reply. Then, and not till then, he saw that diplomacy could not do what arms alone could do. He might just have had time to go back to the decision of two mornings before. But now there arose instead the spectre of an attack on both his eastern frontiers, and panic overwhelmed his whole power of action. Now lost in torpor, now planning one thing, now another, he also paralysed the Empress. Each day saw the Prussian army fatally nearer to Vienna. On July 11, incoherent with despair and grief, the Empress wrote to Metternich :

“ MY DEAR PRINCE,—

“ What would you have me do ; *all that is humanly* possible, I have done. I am answered by the immense responsibility which weighs on him who must decide ; they’re not ready, they

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

don't want to throw themselves into adventures without anything on which to base a display of strength. My word has no more weight. I am almost alone in my opinion, to-day's danger is exaggerated the better to hide to-morrow's. As for me, I can tell you only one thing, and that is that I am miserable, but I can do nothing. I don't even know what is happening, the only thing I can answer is that the Emperor will do what he can for you to have the best possible peace. I am grieved and can write no more.

"If you could give them a good drubbing!"¹

The fact was that not only was Napoleon entangled with Italy, not only was he compromising with Rouher and the Pacifist Liberals, but that the misfortunes of Mexico made him distrust the energetic policy of the Empress who, two years before, had made a fatal error of judgment. But for that, she would still have had the undimmed prestige which would have enabled her to save France and the Crown. As it was, neither she nor any other was allowed to master the situation. There were endless debates as to what France ought to ask. Rouher, to impress the Chambers, thought the Frontiers of 1814. Prince Napoleon, faced by Bismarck, influenced by Victor Emmanuel, and always hostile to the fortune of the sovereigns, thought it best to be very modest. Eugénie, convinced that nothing was more dangerous than indecisiveness, held the view that they should ask for much or nothing at all. She went restlessly to and fro, now full of urgent argument, now in despair. Her political instinct, foreseeing the menaces of fate, showed her the whole situation in the clearness of intense light. She outlined it

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

again and again in its terrible distinctness to Napoleon, to Drouyn, to Randon. It was her nature to be naive, not only because her character was intrinsically honest, but also because the high tension of her nerves demanded always the release of expression, whether in explosions or in badinage.

"Really," she said one day to Prince Reuss, Bismarck's emissary, who appeared in Paris after Sadowa, so to vaunt the army of Prussia as to paralyse Napoleon. "Really you make me shiver. The way your power is growing, we shall run the risk of seeing you one day in front of Paris. In the evening I shall go to sleep French and wake a Prussian." ¹

5

On July 18, the Empress, in the midst of her crushing anxieties, left Paris, according to an earlier plan, to visit the cholera patients at Amiens and other hospitals. Returning on the 23rd from this encounter with death, she found that the political situation was desperate.² The front of things had changed; Rouher had become master of the situation; on the throne was a man whose whole power of mind and will had surrendered to physical exhaustion. For two years she had seen him becoming less and less able to play a man's part: affairs had been rapidly slipping from his control, and he could no longer master the Council. In the intervals of his amour with Bélanger, he had given the little strength he had to writing his life of Cæsar. Now his state had become so critical that he could neither walk nor sleep, and hardly eat. At the moment when energy of decision alone could take the measures to save

¹ La Gorce : *Histoire du Second Empire*.

² V.N.A. Quoted in Oncken, i. 378-9.

France and its Government, the man in absolute power showed every symptom of the type of nervous breakdown which means loss of control of the processes of the mind and, with them, of force of character.

This was the shocking spectacle that met the Empress on her return, and roused her to yet more fierce endeavour. She knew that, not only unable to come to decisions himself, but preventing every one else from making decisions, and growing remoter each day from the one decision which was hers, if Napoleon remained in his absolute position, their crowns, and with them France, were lost. There was therefore only one way of salvation : to induce him to abdicate and herself again assume the Regency. *Une lionne à tous crins* (36) she pressed it with all her power.

Unless he could be got out of the way, she said to Metternich, their fall was certain. But he had grown too weak to allow another to be strong. All that Eugénie succeeded in doing was to get him to spend a night in the camp at Chalons on the way to Vichy, where by her design Drouyn de Lhuys was to be much with him.

"*Jamais*" wrote Metternich, "*depuis je connais le couple Impérial, je n'ai vu l'Empereur si complètement nul, et l'Impératrice prenant à cœur nos intérêts avec une fougue et un zèle si extrêmes.*"¹ (37)

When, on July 26, the preliminaries of the peace of Nikolsburg were signed, Venetia was given to Italy, but France's last hope was gone. Napoleon in a

¹ V.N.A. Published in Oncken. The only result was that she sent to the Emperor of Austria a little medal of the Virgin to bring him good luck, and received in reply an autograph letter from him, thanking her for her efforts of friendship towards Austria, efforts which, he assured her, he would never forget.

theatrical gesture still posed as the arbiter of Europe and patron of the free. Paris therefore arrayed herself to celebrate the victory; but on the night following a great storm burst over the decorated city. All that was left of the banners and triumphal arches in the streets were bedraggled garlands and sodden rags. They were a token of what Eugénie was feeling. She said to Goltz that it was the beginning of the end for their dynasty and for the throne.

The next day Napoleon left for Vichy to try to alleviate the tortures which he was soon to know it was too late to remedy.¹

6

He was gone hardly over a week when a telegram from St. Nazaire brought him and Eugénie face to face with their new feebleness. The very last woman they wanted to see, the Empress Charlotte, had arrived from Mexico to ask for help. Napoleon attempted to put her off, saying that he was ill in bed so that he could not meet her. But she had made up her mind to see him as soon as possible. On August 9 she arrived in Paris. By an unfortunate misunderstanding, the officials who were sent with the Royal carriages to meet her went to the wrong station, and she had to drive to her hotel in a common cab. Eugénie arranged to visit her next day. At two o'clock in the afternoon she arrived, grave and full of anxious affection. But between the two Empresses there could only be constraint. Eugénie seemed to have lost much of her youth and strength since Charlotte had last seen her. Charlotte in great agitation explained how difficult matters in Mexico had become, and appealed for more help. She felt

¹ La Gorce.

that though Eugénie said but little and did not weep, the "tears were rising in her heart." To ease the talk, Eugénie was glad to change the emphasis to Court ceremonial, and to the delights of the country villa at Cuernavaca. She persisted in avoiding serious questions. At last Charlotte asked when she might return the visit. Eugénie suggested the next day but one, but Charlotte, anxious lest the Emperor should evade her, insisted on coming next day, saying that if he would not meet her, she would break in ! When Eugénie drove back to St. Cloud, she found that Benedetti had arrived from Bismarck, saying that if France demurred to Prussia's demands, Prussia with her mobilised army would declare war.¹ What, in the circumstances, could France do for Mexico ?

When Charlotte arrived at St. Cloud next day, the Prince Imperial, wearing the chain of the Mexican Order of the Eagle, took her by the hand, to lead her up the staircase, which was lined by the *Cent Gardes*. Eugénie met her at the head, and walked with her to Napoleon's study. There Charlotte appealed with all her eloquence to Napoleon's sense of justice and of honour that he should keep the promises he had made. He looked at his wife in utter helplessness, and the tears ran down his cheeks. Both the French sovereigns were indeed powerless.² Charlotte's Mexican lady-in-waiting had an orangeade sent in, which Eugénie, though puzzled and annoyed by such an interruption at such a tragic crisis, offered to Charlotte with her own hand.³ Charlotte hesitated to accept it. Her disordered mind was beginning to suspect that it might be poisoned.

¹ Foreign Office Records, referred to as F. O. France, July 1866.

² F. O. France, July 1866.

³ Carette : *Ma Maîtresse*.

On the 13th she returned to St. Cloud, more insistent than before. Eugénie drew her out of Napoleon's presence, and discussed the situation with her in the presence of two Ministers, with whom she was soon involved in violent altercation. Eugénie, overcome, threw herself sobbing in an arm-chair, wishing and perhaps pretending to faint.

On the 18th Napoleon himself visited Charlotte in her hotel, to warn her that she should indulge in no more illusions.

"Your Majesty is immediately concerned in this affair," retorted Charlotte, who after sleepless nights had lost her self-control, "and ought not to indulge in any either."

The only thing for the Mexican sovereigns to do was to abdicate: but that Charlotte, in her fury of pride and resentment, would not contemplate for an instant. Instead, she wrote a letter to Maximilian, in which she compared Napoleon to the devil, and his entourage to hell. "I have thundered at them and torn off their masks," she wrote. "Nothing so unpleasant has happened to them in their lives."¹

Later in the autumn Eugénie heard, with ever deepening horror, how Charlotte's mind lost its balance. This was no simple nervous breakdown like Napoleon's. It was the frenzy of a fatal disease, which reached its crisis in the Vatican. On September 27, at eleven in the morning, the unhappy Empress of Mexico was received in audience by the Pope. Finding that he too could do nothing, her mind became obsessed with panic that all around her were trying to poison her. She returned to her hotel distraught. Next morning, after driving to the Fontana di Trevi for a drink, she ordered the driver to take her to the Apostolic Palace and, on arrival,

¹ Corti: *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*, ii. 686.

vehemently demanded again to see the Holy Father. Dressed in deep mourning, and wild in manner, she threw herself before him and begged him to arrest her suite. Her cries were heartrending, and he tried in vain to calm her. Throughout the whole day she refused to leave the Vatican, and towards evening insisted on sleeping there. A part of the library was rapidly prepared for her, and there she spent the night. She awoke, feeling that under the protection of the Holy Father she was safe ; but fearing that the poisoners might again reach her, she wrote letters of farewell and made her will. Towards the evening of October 1, the Mother Superior of the Convent of St. Vincent induced her to visit an orphanage. In the kitchen the sight of food made her so wild with hunger that she put her hand in a saucepan of boiling water to seize some meat stewing there. Fainting with the pain, she was taken to her carriage and driven to her hotel ; but having recovered consciousness before she arrived, she was carried inside by force, loudly screaming.

When at last her father, the Count of Flanders, had induced her to go back to Miramar, her dreadful delusions still obsessed her, and it was soon realised that her case was hopeless. She was to live a mad-woman for another sixty years. This was not all. The Empress Eugénie was yet to learn that the Mexican enterprise was loaded with yet grimmer violence, and once again the news of it was to reach her in the midst of a triumphant fête.¹

¹ Corti : *Maximilian and Charlotte in Mexico*, ii.

VII

HEIGHTENING TENSION

To make a government requires no great prudence. Settle the seat of power ; teach obedience, and the work is done. To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide ; it only requires to let go the rein. But to form a *free government* : that is, to temper together those opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought ; deep reflection ; a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind. This I do not find in those who take the lead in the national assembly.

BURKE : *French Revolution*.

I

MEANWHILE the Court pursued its splendid round of functions. Through the earlier summer there were glittering receptions in the Tuileries. Compiègne and Fontainebleau would then see great parties assemble, make picnics, hunt, or walk in the forest. Mérimée would be there, with his hard, cold round eye, his four deep wrinkles across his forehead, his thick eyelashes, his square-tipped nose, his smart white waistcoat, old-fashioned broad blue tie, and an English stiffness in his bearing : he would complain of the over-heated rooms, the sumptuous meals, and the antics he was made to play among the trees. Mrs. Charles Moulton of Massachusetts came, sang music which she despised, and was fascinated none the less by the brilliance of the Court. Princess Pauline came, and once boxed the ears of the Prince Imperial who was at times too much petted by the guests. In the evenings sentimental music, charades,

and later "confidences" (for the eyes of the Empress were ever open for a new amusement) made an innocent succession to the table-turning of the years before. At Biarritz it was quieter. There the ceremonial of a Court was deliberately banished, and the sovereigns lived a life of sumptuous ease.

Victor Hugo might deride ; but Mérimée was not the only one on the other side. Octave Feuillet, Alfred de Vigny and Sandeau, like Auber and Offenbach, and a host of competent men supported the Empire with their prestige. Flaubert gave it *Salammbo* and Maupassant caught its after-glow. The Court itself, in which English, Spaniards, and Americans mixed with the functionaries and officers of France, and some members of the old families, was a prophecy of what any Court henceforth must be, for the splendour of Courts, like that of cathedrals, has escaped from genealogies. The Bonapartes had made an English compromise between tradition and democracy.

And yet—it was too obvious—the Court could not escape the gibes of the Faubourg St. Germain that it was fragile and irregular. Queen Victoria, a widow now, knew that it was a lurid contrast to the solid sobriety of St. James's, and did what she could to keep the Prince of Wales away from it. But it suited his taste perfectly, and, in time to come, he was to give in London a British interpretation of its gorgeousness. He could not redeem it, as neither Metternichs nor Albas could redeem it, from the undeniable flavour of spuriousness. While the Royalists whispered that the Empress was the daughter of a Viel-Castel, and some spread the still more ridiculous rumour that Lord Clarendon was her father, Mérimée allowed the impression to gain ground that he himself was so ; and the Bonapartes—Lord Cowley, as we

have seen, appeared to believe it—held proof that the Emperor was not one of them. His strongest supporter, Persigny, was the son of a pastry-cook. Morny, as we have seen, was the son of Queen Hortense. Another central personage, Walewski, was certainly the son of the first Napoleon. But these things could never be asserted and the impressions spread that *dans ces histoires à la, personne n'était le fils de personne*. And yet who, looking at the glittering assemblages that grouped around the figure whose power was absolute, could deny to either eye or mind the sense of fascination?

The taste which created the Court built on the approach of ruin, as though to stay it by a charm, a gorgeous train of festivals. These enriched and intoxicated Paris by, as it were, a fumigation from the distilled essence of all which in the life of the Court spangled or shone above the pools of vice. Such was the Exhibition of 1867. It was a bizarre medley, which gave Pierre de la Gorce the idea of an immense hostelry, as doubtful in reputation as it was brilliant in effect. One had hardly entered it when ear and eye both recognised the presence of the grotesque. A tumult, not less of sound than of design and colour, hinted that behind a succession of impressions to startle and astonish (rather than to please) there was an invitation to licence. A cosmopolitan crowd jostled through a noisy confusion, passing from an English cottage or a Swiss chalet to a Chinese pagoda or a Grecian portico, and from these to an Egyptian temple. While in the crowd the Frenchman rubbed shoulders with the foreigner—prince after prince, monarch after monarch, visited the Tuileries; each state visit was associated with disaster or foreboding. High in relief and colour, as rich in contrasts of light and shade as a Rembrandt, the account which La

Gorce unfolds rivals the chronicles of Froissart. Its royal processions and dazzling dresses were outlined against a background of clownish and even lascivious suggestion. Behind its sumptuous effects, the agents of destruction were at work. The show was at once impressive and sinister ; for beneath the appearances of triumph there were menaces not less arresting.

Invitations were, of course, sent to all the monarchs of Europe ; but there was one who, it was hoped, would not accept. Since the Seven Weeks' War, the leaders of Prussia had been hated, because they had been feared, in Paris, and it was anticipated that their arrival might arouse a demonstration. But Bismarck decided otherwise, and it was arranged that their visit should coincide with that of the Czar.

On June 13 the monarchs of Russia and Prussia were entertained together. With the Emperor and Empress, they saw the most effective parade which even the Second Empire knew. The French army had indeed concentrated on effect at the expense of efficiency. When squadron on squadron charged with drawn swords upon their sovereigns and their escort, and halted but a few paces from them with the cry of "*Vive l'Empéreur !*" the thrill was magical. At that moment there swept through the people and the army a conviction that French power was irresistible.

Yet in the drive back to the Tuileries, the Czar, seated at the Emperor's side, was nearly shot by a Pole, and he had a fatal impression of French hospitality, even though the procession moved on amidst shouts more frenzied than before.

That evening the Czar, imperious and chill, walked through a great reception at the Tuileries with the Empress on his arm. With a radiance of regal

beauty and spirit that seemed to make her whole being sparkle with light as the diamonds in her crown were sparkling, she exerted her every faculty to reassure and please him. But his glance was not less restless, nor his demeanour less icy. The man was lost in the figure of a kingly remoteness unknown long since in France. In comparison with him, the King of Prussia, whose hair was white, whose cheeks were pink, and who was jovial with ladies, looked like a country squire. But with the King was the man who was waiting for the moment when he should destroy for ever that majesty and state. With a large head, and eyes hard yet glittering, with a large body, made more remarkable by a white uniform, the Junker Bismarck moved like a mammoth. He was preparing his order to the German newspapers that their tone towards France should be as truculent and threatening as it had been towards Austria: "Revolver in pocket, with our finger on the trigger, we must keep close watch on our suspect neighbour's hands; and he must learn that we shall have no hesitation in shooting instantly, and with intent to kill, as soon as he spits across our frontier."¹ Napoleon still wanted negotiations: Bismarck's tone was still aggressive.² And as Eugénie had pertinently asked with regard to him as early as 1859, "Why keep on barking, if one never means to bite?"³

Throughout the month of June the fêtes continued. Don Francisco d'Assisi, the consort of Queen Isabella, came, and the Empress, to do honour to her former Queen, supervised all the entertainments in his honour. Everything was magnificent—except the

¹ Ludwig: *Bismarck*, 1st English edition, p. 319.

² Du Barail: *Memoirs*.

³ V.N.A. Unpublished. Another omission of Professor Oncken's.

figure of the royal guest ; and as the Empress moved among the splendours she had organised, a murmur of admiration arose behind her like a cloud of gold dust. In a white burnous embroidered with gold she moved forward, wearing her diadem, as on the lake of Annecy. She loved to be praised for the fêtes, and for the suites of rooms she arranged, just as she would immediately turn aside any tendency towards allusion to her appearance. "*Eh !*" she called out in her Southern way to Princess Metternich, "What do you say of my fête ?"

The Princess replied, "I say that it is worthy of Your Majesty."

Then came the Queen of Holland, and a great Ball was given for her at the Austrian Embassy, for they did not know what was happening in Mexico. On June 31, the Prince of Wales, the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Prince of Orange, the Count and Countess of Flanders, and Prince Humbert of Italy came to meet the Sultan, who followed the Khedive, and were the guests of the sovereigns at a great banquet in the Tuileries.

The next day there was to be a great ceremony. Driving in state from the Tuileries to the Champ de Mars by the Champs Elysées, the Empress was to present the medals at the Exhibition to the prize-winners. Before they left the Tuileries, they heard shocking news : the Austrian Minister in Washington telegraphed a rumour that the Emperor Maximilian had been shot at Querétaro. White and almost fainting, the Empress asked Napoleon what they were to do. It was always just possible that the news was false, and, with remorse and terror in her heart, the Empress in a brilliant toilet drove in state to the ceremony. When they reached the Palace of Industry, they found that the places of the Count and

Countess of Flanders were empty. A confirming wire was handed to Napoleon during the ceremony : he scribbled a note for the Austrian Ambassador, who quietly withdrew. The Empress performed her duty to the end, but when she reached the Tuileries she fainted.

Earlier in the month, Maximilian, sold by Lopez to the rebels for sixty thousand dollars, had been imprisoned at Querétaro, tried by them, and condemned by them to death. On June 18, in the early morning, he had been shot, and Juárez refused to give up even his body to his mother. This grim end to the brilliant career which Eugénie had dreamed and planned for the delightful prince who had first visited her ten years before was to be recounted with details now touching, now ghastly, in Paris, to fill the Empress not only with horror, but foreboding. Her most brilliant dream had come to this. Nothing was left of the Catholic Empire in the New World but heavy losses of money in Paris, a mad Empress screaming her despair or her pride to castle walls—and a feeling of profound satisfaction at the White House in Washington.

2

The French sovereigns not only grieved for Maximilian and for themselves. They feared complications with Franz Josef. But Vienna was as anxious to remain on good terms with Paris as Paris with Vienna. Reassuring messages were exchanged, and it was suggested that Napoleon and Eugénie should pay a visit of condolence. Eugénie herself hesitated. "It will be the most painful thing in the world," she said to Metternich, "to find myself face to face with a brother and a mother to whose grief I have con-

tributed by my insistence upon the expedition to Mexico. If I had already known the Emperor, the Empress, and the Archduchess Sophie, I should long since have thrown myself into their arms to show them what I feel, though that they can hardly doubt. But since I do not know them, I am afraid I may seem too cold or too tragic.”¹

Metternich knew that these words came from the Empress's heart. He knew also that there was much impatience in certain circles in Vienna. It was decided, therefore, that the meeting should take place at Salzburg; and on August 18 the sovereigns of the two Empires met in the lovely baroque town where the memories of Mozart met those of the Middle Ages in a mingling of fortress, and valley, and wooded hill, which night and day surrounded them with fresh effects of romantic charm. While the two Emperors moved from condolence to questions of State, in which the menace of Prussia was uppermost, the two Empresses were rivals in regal beauty. Eugénie, it is true, was dressed very quietly, for all she wished was to efface herself. Her appearance had won her triumphs enough, and had never been her central interest: the last of her wishes was to flaunt it now. And yet when men asked which of the Empresses was the more beautiful, or the more striking woman, the Guzman seemed not less queenly than the Wittelsbach. Eugénie was now forty, and her full figure had a quiet majesty which gave little hint of the sprightliness of her temperament. Elizabeth was also tall and graceful, but her expression was less pleasing. Her temper was painfully uncertain, even on occasions of State. At one moment she was gaiety itself, at another she would be deep in a sulk and keep her face hidden by her fan. Eugénie,

¹ Corti, ii. p. 829.

though she could be furious, never forgot, even in intense suffering, that the crowd expected to see her always radiant. Hands are often surer than features to tell of inherited mettle. Eugénie's, which were white and slender, yet had a lovely dimple in their softness, were every way different from those of Elizabeth, which were too long. The tips of Elizabeth's fingers were flat and large, with ugly nails.¹

3

In the autumn the pageants of the Exhibition were over. "*Jamais*," wrote La Gorce, "*nous n'étmes plus d'hôtes et moins d'amis*." (38) France had become thoroughly uneasy, especially in the precincts of the Court. "Every one is afraid without quite knowing why," such were the words of Mérimée. "*C'est une sensation comme celle qui fait éprouver la musique de Mozart, quand le commandeur va paraître*." (39) And Bismarck was the *commandeur*. From then everything was unconsciously prefaced by the words "if it suits Bismarck." And a heap of anxieties was crowded into that. "The Emperor is preoccupied with many things," as Mérimée also noted, "which each bring with them a load of embarrassment, Mexico, Germany, the Pope, the bad harvests, the needle-gun. *Tout est à solder à la fois*." (40)

The question weighed the more on them, not only because Napoleon was unequal to dealing with it, and because Eugénie never won enough confidence to make her power of decision final, but because the dynasty was in the position of an elected ministry. One failure would be enough to dethrone it. The Empress felt the strain. "In France one can do

¹ Mercy-Argenteau : *Last Love of an Emperor*.

anything at the beginning," she would say, "but after a while one can't even blow one's nose."¹

4

Nevertheless, in outward seeming she was undisturbed. In politics she stood alone. As the first lady of the Court, she was surrounded by devoted affection. She was the mother of a son who from his earliest years had played the part of a prince, and who, she fondly trusted, was growing up equal to coming early to the throne. Headstrong and high-tempered at times, as young princes easily are, he was affectionate, loyal, and religious. He was too like his father to be good-looking, but he had the royal gift of charm; he was courageous and intelligent; he filled his mother with hope and, now that he was old enough to lunch with his parents, he brought into their day a child's freshness. Then with the Empress always was her faithful Spanish Pepa, always intimate, always devoted, always understanding, even though she had a Spanish ferocity in her temper, and now in later years the equally devoted French maid Aline. Now, too, the Empress's heart was softened and consoled by the company of her two nieces, the Duchess of Alba's daughters, who lived almost always at the Court and who worshipped the Empress. And around her was still the troop of lovely women who meant more to her heart than men. To charm and fascinate men, the Empress was delighted; she cared almost nothing for their physical beauty, however, and not much for their attentions. But she had an eye that was always keen for the beauty of a young girl. To be a maid-of-honour to the Empress, beauty was an indis-

¹ E. Lavisse : *Revue de Paris*, Oct. 1, 1920.

pensable qualification, and often a sufficient one. In 1858 in Brittany, Mlle Bouvet, who had pleased her eye, was at once chosen as a maid-of-honour ; in June, 1869, her eye rested on Mlle de Larminat at Chapel in the Tuileries, and on the strength of this she too was summoned into the life of the Court. This was noticed before the Prince Imperial was born. "*L'Impératrice est toujours enjouée. On la voit rechercher particulièrement les femmes élégantes, et surtout les étrangères*" ;¹ (41) and Eugénie admitted in extreme old age that she liked to be surrounded by women's pretty faces.² It happens almost inevitably that women (or men) who have this Platonic enjoyment of the beauty of their own sex, if they marry, marry those who gratify their ambitions and not their senses. To the Empress it seemed almost incredible that a woman should marry a man for his looks ; ugly or handsome, she said once, they are all very much the same at the end of a week.³ And when friendship, or admiration, rather than their blood, give them the instincts of passion, their natures are more tense, more ambitious, sometimes more religious. Not seldom, in such cases, one can notice also an abnormal nervous energy, which takes often a strong ideal turn. The Empress was then true altogether to this slightly abnormal type, which it is easy for those who know it to recognise ; and once recognised, it hands the key to open her enigmas. It explains both her disgust with, and her long loyalty to the first man she had loved, and the fact that no one took his place. For no one could say that she ever felt a natural attraction towards Louis Napoleon. It explains how she was never lured by the flames of

¹ Baroche : *Memoirs*.

² *The Times*, July 14, 1920.

³ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress*.

dissipation which rose from the fires which physical attraction lit in the Court of Queen Isabella. It accounts for her intellectual enthusiasms, and for the power of fascination which went with her vivacity and eagerness. It accords her mingling of excitement and temper—*sa fougue caractéristique*, (42) as Metternich called it—with the sweetness of her nature. It explains, above all, how the mentality of the woman—intuitive, dependent, impulsive—went with the sudden decisiveness, the unflinching courage, and the sportsmanship of Eugénie. So, too, we understand how her moods of activity rapidly became excitement, and how this excitement was succeeded by nervous and mental fatigue, and then again by the strength of courage. It explains her rapid conquest of Prince Albert, and her long devotion to Queen Victoria; it renders perfectly natural her sympathy with and enthusiasm for an English woman who composed, when she herself had no taste whatever for her music. It explains finally how little she was understood by the grosser men and women who frequented her Court.

This then unfolds the mystery of the part that Eugénie played in the history of France. She was all through a brilliant woman, of phenomenal nervous energy, belonging to a slightly but distinctly abnormal type where the life of natural impulse was replaced by passions on another plane, tending in another direction, where nature was etherealised to that something between sense and spirit which lives in the eye rather than in the blood. "To put it bluntly," wrote Dame Ethel Smyth, "she had no sensuality in her nature."¹

Almost always men and women of this type are temperamentally religious; and faith, when they believe, is inclined to turn towards that application

¹ *Streaks of Life.*

of human faculties to eternal realities, that pre-occupation of the passions of the heart with supernatural and divine things which produce the phenomena of mysticism. But at this point the Empress sharply reverted towards normality. Though she was essentially an idealist, her mind was practical, not artistic, and her religion, while thoroughly and at times fiercely Spanish, was far more occupied with loyalty to institutions and to ceremonial than with the science of the soul. Her Catholicism was not theological but charitable: it was consistent, but even when she prayed intensely, it was according to the habit of belief, and not as an end in itself. There are some who attempt to act according to the Divine Will, and Eugénie from beginning to end was one of these; but she never attained to identifying this accord with the Divine Will into the direct apprehension by heart with mind of its personal mystery. She was never a mystic; she was always a Catholic; her Catholicism took the turn, at once sentimental and practical, of regular but not ardent piety, and of works of mercy. The weaker side of her religion was shown by her acceptance of the priest Bauer, the stronger by her interest in hospitals.

Bauer, it will be remembered, she had first met at Eaux Bonnes before her marriage. In the late 'sixties he came back to her, and became the confidant of all women who could make piety the fashion. The Empress was for years under his influence; ascetic in appearance, he soon became elegant, then luxurious, at last depraved. "*Il avait été,*" wrote General du Barail, "*le confesseur des dames de la cour qui le trouvaient très gentil. Je crois qu'après avoir essayé expliquer les mystères sacrés, il s'est adonné à l'étude des mystères profanes.*"¹ (43)

¹ *Memoirs*, ii. 224.

5

In 1863 Barthez noticed how, when the Empress was pressing upon him with her usual spirit her ideas about hospitals, some of them were excellent ; but some, he thought, were not. The Empress complained that her best inspirations were being distorted or destroyed by all sorts of things, and principally by commissions and red tape. The fact was that she wanted to take advantage of the latest scientific discoveries, and to treat invalids before they had become incurable. "If you could have heard all this," wrote Barthez to his wife, "you would say, as I do, she is a good, intelligent, charming woman who tries to do good and to be of use. If there is something to be regretted in certain sides of her character, it is impossible not to like her frank *impulsiveness*, good and anxious to do good ; there rises up within her a glittering fountain of kindly ideas, presented in lively and often picturesque language."¹

When she was Regent in 1865, she made a special study of child prisoners. She soon saw what it is to do anything with a bureaucracy which always resents the implied criticism of reform. One day, visiting La Petite Roquette, she found that children were imprisoned in solitary cells ; on the excuse that the worse should not contaminate the less bad, they had to endure a savage isolation. Not one of five hundred children living beside one another ever looked in another's face, or heard the sound of another voice. Even the *chapelle* was constructed like a hive, so that they should see the altar without seeing one another. The Empress came and spoke to them, horrified that children should be made to suffer a punishment reserved for the worst criminals.

¹ *La Famille Impériale.*

"What have you done?" she said to one.

"I used to sleep under the bridge."

"Where is your mother?"

"I have none."

"Who takes care of you?"

"Daddy's mistress."

"Why did you run away from home?"

"She used to beat me."

"And your father?"

"Father wasn't there."

It was not an uncommon story.

One boy was sent there by his father who, being a small official, had been horrified to find that his son had sneaked some trifle in the street, and had had him shut up for a year.

The boy was furious and swore that he would seek vengeance.

"As soon as I get out of here, I shall kill him."

Nothing could calm him, and no matter what was done to him, he did not change his mind. Eugénie cross-questioned him and got a sensible answer. "My father had no right for such a small thing to torture me like that. It is unjust, and I will kill him." Then the Empress, drawing him gently to her, began to speak to him so kindly, and found so much to say about duty being strict, that the child fell on his knees, burst into tears, and promised to forgive.¹

When Eugénie visited the infirmary at St. Lazare, a wretched woman was dying. One could no longer see if she was young or old. Her life alternated between the streets and the hospitals. On the threshold of death, the spectral scenes of her degradation, her miseries, and her shame had thrown her into a paroxysm of fury. "Let me alone," she

¹ Carette : *Memoirs*.

screamed to the chaplain. "There is no God. I shall not suffer more in hell than I have suffered on earth."

From her shrivelled lips, in a sort of wild eloquence, poured the story of her life which, as she gave it up, she cursed. Once she had a child. A passion of mother's tenderness showed that here was one who had greeted her with smiles, and who had loved her. And this one had been taken from her. As her story culminated in a shriek of blasphemy, the Empress came to her, and spoke words of sympathy so touching and so true that the locked heart once again opened its doors.

"What!" she said. "Rich, beautiful, happy, you interest yourself in a wretch like me; because I suffer, you seem touched. It is true, then, that there is a good God, because your heart is good."

She grew calm. She asked pardon of the nurses; she begged for a rosary. With the help of the Empress she put it round her neck, and then she asked for a priest, and made her confession. She died at peace.¹

The orphanage of the Prince Imperial, and the hospital of Ste. Eugénie, the military hospital at Vincennes, a hospital at Berck Plage, followed the founding of the Maison Eugénie Napoléon with the 600,000 francs which were offered to the Empress by Paris for her necklace of diamonds.

On February 22, 1866, as Eugénie was visiting Charenton, one of the patients, whose outward bearing was perfectly normal, and in the most reasonable and even eloquent terms, begged her to intervene so that he might be justly set free.

"I am busy with scientific work," he said to the Empress. "My family is afraid of seeing my fortune

¹ Carette, *op. cit.*

squandered in the researches I am making with regard to the new applications of science, and it is their odious rapacity which is the reason why I am shut up here. Madame, may I show you one of my works? Have it examined; and they will tell you if an unbalanced mind can push scientific calculation so far." His manner was so good, his language so clear and dignified, that the Empress, who never entirely trusted doctors, and was quite prepared to believe that doctors of lunacy saw lunatics everywhere, resolved to do all she could to soften his fate. She charged Duruy, the Minister of Public Instruction, to go into the case, and before long it was reported that it was the work of a mind of high quality.

The Empress made up her mind to go back to Charenton to see her protégé again, and to tell him the result of the test of his work. He was overjoyed again to see the Empress.

"Ah, Madame," he said to her, "you alone could deliver me. My family treats me so badly. Look: they have put the Pantheon on to the end of my nose to prevent me from going out." The Empress had to realise that for once her work had been in vain.¹ But thousands had benefited from her enterprise.

Once and once only did she arouse the enthusiasm of France, and then it amazed her till it became actually distasteful. It was at that moment when, after the Battle of Sadowa, her mind was tense with the anxiety of the crisis and Napoleon's inability to meet it, that she went to visit the cholera patients at Amiens. It did not cost her so much as an earlier visit to an infectious hospital when the Prince was a child. She knew that cholera spread no contagion in the air and faced it unabashed. "It was her way of going under fire," she said. To each of the patients

¹ Carette, *op. cit.*

in the Hôtel Dieu she herself spoke. She then visited the Préfecture and the Little Sisters of the Poor. The Bishop, who had not paid a single visit to the suffering, offered to accompany her. But this she declined. "*Adieu, Monseigneur,*" she called out to him as her train moved from the station ; "*surtout soignez bien votre santé.*"¹ (44)

6

While Eugénie's charities made a certain claim upon the people, she never succeeded in making herself beloved by them. Nor was her idealism in tune with the spirit of her time. Her Spanish mind, it is true, was practical ; but it had neither the materialism nor the pessimism of the age of Hugo and Flaubert, which made such phenomenal advances in the material organisation of production and exchange, and so spread both wealth and sordidness over the modern world. It was an age of fact, when matter seemed in one sense to dominate the minds which were mastering it : the machine seemed mightier than the Frankenstein who had created it. With this strong impulse towards material success which seemed to domineer over France as over England, imagination was disgusted. It tried to turn away to Gothic glooms and lost itself in romantic despair, or else, mesmerised by the materialism which it tried to shun, it turned back, now pessimistic, now cynically amused, precisely to register the facts of a life it could neither arrange nor enjoy.²

To both of these phases the baroque mind of Eugénie was alien. She found place neither for the factory, nor for sentimentalism, nor for a romantic

¹ Baroche.

² P. Bourget : *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*.

horror of either. Her Spanish spirit had the vivid objectivity of Goya's paintings, without the fierceness which gives his etchings their bitter poignancy ; there was something of the savage in her, which delighted in the bull-fight and the stag hunt, so that fierce sports and anger released her passion ; but it was never stifled into sordidness. Between her Spanish charm, also, and the temper of the French masses a gulf was fixed. They were not sentimentalists to rhapsodise over the elegance of the sovereign as their own possession. Their savage caprices were jealous only to seize for themselves immediate advantage. There is, too, in the French who do not go to Church a militant hostility to religion, and this always provoked antagonism to the Catholic loyalties of the Empress. But, apart from these, her idealism cut her off from them. People will tolerate in clergy, but they strongly dislike in royalties, a standard obviously higher than their own : a bluff or licentious sovereign is what appeals to them. Or, if they cannot have mediocrity in morals, they must have it in tastes. In spite of long unpopularity, Victoria regained the people's favour by her homeliness, by something the middle classes could recognise as an affinity. Of this there was nothing, or next to nothing, in Eugénie. The whirring, fiery rocket of her mind shot upwards through the dark in arrowy flights of which the French bourgeoisie could divine nothing, even when it burst above them into blazing fronds or coloured stars. The only cleverness they tolerate is one that is bent to understand them. Eugénie no more understood the French than they sympathised with her ; but they recognised from day to day that their destinies were passing more and more into the hands of a daring, forceful, Catholic foreigner who was not of their world. Let there be a

hint of disaster, and their distrust would be red with savagery, and they would scream for her blood. She knew it. The quality in them which she could not gauge might turn the logic of their egoism to frenzy. Stable to those who understand them, they were to her capricious—capricious with a fierceness that might in any crisis cut off her head, as it had cut off that of Marie Antoinette.

7

The more powerful she became in the later years of the reign, the stronger the opposition to her among the Emperor's old adherents, who saw their power fall from their hands as his grip weakened. To stay criticism he himself gave to the *Dix-Décembre*¹ newspaper a portrait of her as he saw her: no one can deny its accuracy. "The Comtesse de Teba," he began, "has not disappeared in the splendour of the Crown of France. The Empress still remains a woman of simple and natural tastes. . . . The lot of the suffering always awakens her sympathy, and she loves to busy herself with all kinds of social work. . . . One still recognises in her a little of the young *phalanstérienne*. The welfare of women is an aim especially dear to her. She aims at improving their position and had obtained official recognition for Rosa Bonheur. . . .

"During her leisure hours the Empress engages in serious reading. No question of economics or finance is beyond her, and it is charming to listen to her discussing these abstruse questions with experts. Literature, history, and art are common topics of conversation with her, and the Empress's tea-parties are one of the greatest delights of Compiègne. On

¹ November 15, 1868.

these occasions she handles with equal ease the most homely questions and the most profound ; the novelty of her outlook, the daring, almost the audacity of her views, impress her listeners, and in fact enthrall them. Although her mode of expression is occasionally faulty, it is full of colour and vivacity. On business matters she is extraordinarily precise ; on questions of ethics and politics she can rise to a lofty eloquence.

"Religious without bigotry, learned without pedantry, she talks very freely on every topic. Perhaps she is a little too fond of argument. Possessing an impulsive temperament, she sometimes lets her tongue run away with her, and this has more than once made her enemies ; but even her exaggeration springs from her wish to do good."

The husband who wrote this passage had many a time listened to and deserved her denunciations ; his good nature nevertheless had survived, and with it a great admiration of the loftiness of character which was revealed, rather than disguised, by her excitability. For it is not always the finest characters which are the easiest to live with. She was too vivacious and too moral for compromise. Her courage, radiance, generosity, charity, grace, she placed at the service of the throne ; but her heart was not of that commonplace fibre that could beat in unison with those of politicians. Just as the really successful royalty is both more homely and more assuredly superior than she could be, so, too, that royalty must have enough hypocrisy to compromise with the astute. She remained what Princess Metternich admired—the brilliant woman of the world, who was through everything a *grande d'Espagne*.

Through her encounters with French leaders of culture, her mind had become occupied with very different interests from those Hubner had criticised

at the beginning of the reign. Lord Lyons, on his arrival at the Embassy, was much struck by the grace and ability with which she spoke of the Roman question, and agreed that it might be settled by an international council.¹ Her talks with the savants at Compiègne were extraordinarily practical. "*Et avec quelle vivacité de parole, quelle grace de geste, quel feu dans le regard, tout cela était dit.*"² (45)

Calderon, Byron, Shakespeare—in that order—she now named as her favourite authors. Her rôle still fascinated her. Asked who she would choose to be if not herself, she answered, "*What I am.*" Loyalty she named her favourite virtue; Lopez, who had sold Maximilian, as the character she most detested in history. In the little requisitory which, at the instance of Mrs. Moulton, became after 1867 a favourite pastime in the Court, one question was, "What fault do you excuse most readily?" She answered, "Those which passion excuses," while Napoleon wrote, "Those which help me." Asked for his favourite occupation, his answer was, "To look for the solution of insoluble problems." But hers was simply, "To do good."³ No wonder he was popular, and that she seemed provoking.

8

There are times when occupation with the good itself seems an insoluble problem. And the greatest problem of the moment was the government of France. It had become clear that not only was an absolute monarchy insecure from the popular reaction against an error, but that the weakening of

¹ Lord Newton : *Life of Lord Lyons*.

² Nisard : *Souvenirs*, ii. 240.

³ Hindenburg-Lindenkrone : *In the Courts of Memory*.



*[From the bust by Carpeaux
at Malmaison]*

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

the Emperor and the possibility of his death should set the control of affairs on a liberal ground. This meant introducing into the Government an element which might be hostile to the Throne, and which had become very critical of the Imperial record. That, until Sadowa, had been, but for Mexico, successful enough. The Crimean War was no doubt unnecessary: and the advantages of the Italian one more than doubtful. But Lord Cowley could still argue that the reign had been rich in successes. "If even the altered state of Germany is more than the Emperor contemplated," he wrote to the Foreign Secretary, "or than France approves, he can at least appeal to the French nation from 1832 to 1866. He can remind them of the Northern Courts always ready when he ascended the throne to league against France—now disunited through his policy; to Austrian influence no longer predominant in Italy; to Russian authority no longer felt in Germany; to Germany herself free, if she chooses to be so, with no cause or notice for quarrelling with France—if France will but let her alone."¹

Nevertheless, even if the Emperor had not lost his popularity, the time for a change had come. The Empress saw it, and prepared herself accordingly. Indeed, it was her nature rather to meet occasions as they arose than to mould history according to preconceived ideas. And the preoccupation of Napoleon with the Countess de Mercy-Argenteau, who had superseded Lady Mary Craven after the collapse of Bélanger, gave Eugénie no chance to forget that his weaknesses survived. Almost at the end of her days when a friend said to her apropos of an unfaithful husband, "*Les hommes valent bien peu*,"

¹ F. O. France, Sept. 2, 1866. Unpublished. (F. O. refers to the Foreign Office Records in London.)

she straightened herself up and grasped her visitor's arm. "*Mais nous sommes seules, n'est-ce pas, Madame ?*" she asked. "*Eh bien, alors je vous dirai : ils ne valent rien.*"¹ (46)

The elections of 1869 settled the constitutional question ; again, as at the institution of the Empire, the great masses in the country recognised the fount of their stable future ; but in the professional circles of politics, men were growing impatient with the system which enabled a man, possibly without previous discussion with his ministers, or without any consultation with legislatures or the public, at any moment to form and carry into effect resolutions of far-reaching effect.² Lord Lyons, writing to the Foreign Office in August, described the situation as critical. The Emperor had neither the confidence, the energy, nor the power which he had once enjoyed : a young, restless, ambitious generation, which never knew the disorder from which Napoleon had saved France, had developed a strong Republican feeling which was beginning to dominate the tendency towards reform.³ Napoleon hankered, no doubt, after the old system of personal government, but he knew that he must prepare for great changes. It was the old story, he said, of the old lion : first they pared his claws, and then they took his teeth out, leaving him only his mane which was not enough to defend him.⁴ But he and the Empress both definitely accepted a government which handed the power and responsibility to the ministry of an elected chamber.

Napoleon had thought of an offensive and defensive alliance with Italy and Austria, but decided that

¹ Duchess of Sermoneta : *Things Past*.

² F. O. France, July 1869. Unpublished.

³ F. O. France, Aug. 27, 1869. Unpublished.

⁴ Baroche, July 8, 1869.

they would act as they thought best without an alliance; and, in fact, he was warned by Lord Clarendon, who seemed to know of Bismarck's secret treaty with the Czar, that Russia would attack Austria the minute that Austria sided with France against Prussia. As for the political reforms, he felt confident that he could trust the good sense of the French nation.

Eugénie felt much less free from alarm on both these points. Although she was reassured to some extent about Napoleon's disease, she knew what Bismarck meant, and she feared that the Parliament would not be efficient enough to meet him. When Lord Clarendon was in Paris in September 1869, she asked his advice, especially on Prince Napoleon's bid for regency by offers of excessive liberality. Lord Clarendon reminded her that both Charles X and Louis Philippe had fallen through domestic dissension, and that it was her duty to make a friend of Prince Napoleon. And she agreed that he was right.¹

What France needed above all was a stronger army against the constant menace from Prussia: that was clear. In the summer of 1869, as the Suez Canal was being finished, complications arose from another quarter: there was a quarrel between Turkey and the Khedive. Beust had written a very strong dispatch to Constantinople, informing the Sublime Porte that if it pursued its gratuitous quarrel with Cairo, it must expect no countenance or support from the European powers.

To soothe the Sultan, to inaugurate a triumph of French engineering, to leave France freer for political developments, and to give change to nerves strained for anxiety, it was decided that the Empress should go to open the Suez Canal, visiting Constantinople on the way.

¹ *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, i. p. 626.

VIII

THE TOURNÉE IN THE EAST

Whereas the Terrene and the Red Sea meet
 Being distant less than full a hundred leagues,
 I meant to cut a channel to them both
 That men might quickly sail to India.

MARLOWE : *Tamburlaine* i. 1.

There's the secret of the Indies to unravel,
 And then the Turk to beat.

HERBERT TRENCH : *Canzone di Sebastian Vallez*.

I

* No sooner had the Empress decided on the journey to Constantinople and Suez than she engaged M. Maspéro to give them a course of lectures on Egypt and its monuments, during which she would ask questions while her suite took notes. He could not have lectured to a group more attentive—or more ignorant.

It was at half-past five in the evening of September 30, 1869, that the Empress left St. Cloud. She had in her suite her two nieces and their governess, Madame de la Poëze, Madame de Nadaillac, Prince Murat, General Douay, Davillier, Bussac, Clary, Mlle Marion, and Mlle de Larminat.

At ten the next evening they were kneeling at the monument of Magenta, and at sunset the day after they were on board the *Aigle* at Venice. Nigra was with them as they went up the Grand Canal in the gondola or took tea on the bridge of the yacht,

listening to the echoes of music from the distance in intervals of silence broken by the splash of an oar.

On the Sunday she heard Mass in San Marco, and received a visit from Victor Emmanuel. It was neither long nor cordial. He knew that she had no sympathy for the policy of Cavour. She had no taste either for Victor Emmanuel's ambitions nor his personality. She knew his attitude towards the Church in 1855. When he had come to Paris he had said to Walewski, "All the priests are *canaille*. If they had followed my advice, I would have had them all shot. They deserve nothing else—the *canaille*!"¹ And that type of sentiment, which the Empress had not forgotten, did not recommend him. After fifteen years, his large prominent eyes, his huge moustachios, the coarseness of his manner and talk, his aggressive affability to women, and his boisterous menaces to the clergy aroused the great repugnance which she kept to her death. Contempt for him was not a sentiment but a passion.² She would finish her denunciation with the withering phrase, "*Et s'il pouvait même monter à cheval!*" (47)

After a day among the palaces, the canals, and the glittering mosaics of Venice they sailed down the Adriatic on their way to Athens. The Empress revelled as always in the voyage, and felt nothing of the motion of the waves. She let her mind travel back once more to the thoughts of her gay Spanish childhood. At Athens there were the King and Queen to visit, the Acropolis to inspect. Eugénie went through that without enthusiasm and, indeed, thoroughly depressed. Greek statuary meant nothing to her: she passed with a hurried glance before the temple of Olympian Zeus. Ancient Greece was as

¹ Colonel Wellesley: *The Paris Embassy*.

² Dame Ethel Smyth: *Streaks of Life*.

distasteful to her as the Athens of her own time. Even the proportions of the monuments struck her as mean, the ruins as wretched, and the whole place as poor and dingy. "These old Greeks," she said, "were so insufferably tiresome, such chatterers, living everlastingly in civil wars, and fusses and intrigues. In fact, a people impossible to govern."¹

The sight of Constantinople had a very different effect on her. Her face brightened. As she looked at the crowds in the clothes of many colours which acclaimed her arrival, she seemed to become one with the glitter and brilliance of the East. The Sultan had placed at her disposal the Palace of Beylerbey on the Asian coast. A dazzling white on the outside, the interior was a flash of dazzling colours.

After a dinner of eighteen courses, in a palace which was too golden, the Empress did not find the Sultan a fluent talker. When a difficult hour had passed she entered his barge, which was hung with purple velvet spangled with gold. It was a perfect Southern night. The Empress, seated as upon a throne, wore a white dress embroidered with gold, and over it a veil of tulle. Her arms and neck glittered with jewels; on her head was a tiara of diamonds. Her beauty rivalled that of the night, and she seemed like a vision floating on the silver water.

As she sailed on, there was one admirer, an American, on whom the scene awoke a particularly deep admiration. It was Dr. Thomas Evans, the American dentist, who was such a faithful friend of the Court that, as we saw, the son of Contessa Castiglione had been confided to his care, and so grew himself to be a dentist, Dr. Hugenschmidt. As her

¹ Comtesse des Garets : *L'Impératrice Eugénie en Exil*.

barge swept over the sea, his boat was in danger of collision. A swift movement of hers distracted the oarsmen and she saved him. Before a year was over he was to find a singular opportunity of showing his devotion.

She returned to a palace which seemed to the Western sense enchanted. It was only half lit by the lamps on the ground, the fountains were quiet, the bizarre brilliance of colour was mellowed, thick carpets made even movement silent.

Here at noon next day the Empress received the Sultan's favourite wife, accompanied by a dozen women attendants. The Empress and the Sultana made laboured exchanges through an interpreter, the Sultana making it plain that her visit was to be with her attendants, whose shrill cries, like those of paroquets, witnessed their excitement at being let loose in the palace. The great moment was when the attendants, who were excited at discovering the French maids still there, came suddenly on Eugénie's negro servant, Moussa. "Me not look, me keep eyes shut" was his account of himself at this crisis. It was the truth; they had made him blind with terror.

On other days they visited the old seraglio and Santa Sophia; they assisted at a military review; they tasted in the bazaar the hundred savours of the East. On the Sunday they heard Mass in the Armenian rite, and at the diplomatic audience which followed the Empress was suddenly asked to make a speech. It was a thing she could never do. Apparently silenced by stifling emotion, and hesitating for every word, she stammered out a few sentences of obscure meaning, her voice weak and her knees giving way beneath her.

In the evening, at a gala dinner of the Sultan's, she

aimed at retrieving the disgrace. The Sultan had a little less of the look of the wild beast in his eyes, and the Empress was herself again. The whole evening she scintillated with her wittiest vivacity. She had a kind word for every one, and made a particular point of a talk with every diplomat.

As they left Constantinople they brought to the Empress a carpet with a portrait of the Emperor worked with a fine needle, with human hair and moustache. It was the most grotesque thing imaginable. "Good heavens, how ugly it is!" burst out Madame de Nadaillac. The Empress was in torment how to remedy this naïveté, and talked so much about the likeness and the fineness of the work that she succeeded in leaving an impression of deep gratitude for it. Her visit had been a great success, and a Turk told her as she departed that she almost equalled the Sultan.¹

2

On November 5 she was on her way up the Nile in a dahabieh. From time to time they would stop and make excursions on camels or donkeys; sometimes a group of fellahin would pass by and make a reverence. But the Empress had another preoccupation. It was her suite. Although they had each been desperately eager to be included, they found when they got to Egypt that the programme was a little more arduous than they had imagined. Egyptology, even with the assistance of Mariette Bey, was an ennui to some who regretted the gaieties of Paris. The Empress herself was not in an easy mood. Warned about the conventional etiquette of the East, as she had been, she insisted on maintaining the highest standard of discipline in her suite,

¹ Comtesse des Garets, *op. cit.*

and her tongue was not less free than it had always been. "I am not always in control of my nerves," she said, "and have said things that wound." Added to this, the weather had been trying. Jellies were no sooner on the table than they melted, and the Empress, solicitous for the abdomens of her suite, had forbidden iced drinks. The suite found refuge in absorbing quantities of bananas.

One night of stars she joined Mlle de Larminat, and begged her to calm M. Hepp, a gentleman-in-waiting, who had been placed there by the Emperor to protect the Empress from herself in a country where any irregularity of manner might compromise her fatally, and his task had been so invidious that he had thought of flight; then she went on to talk of Egypt, and its ancient cult of death.

"It's an odd idea of the beyond," she said. "The Egyptians did not believe that we were made up of soul and body, but of a body and of its double—lighter, more fluid, more perfect. For the Egyptian death leads not to annihilation, but it is an addition, a means of perfection. '*In peace with Osiris.*' It is what the living always wish for the dead—peace.

"I have always thought that it was a fine thing in the Egyptians to keep for their dead the appearance of life. There is something so frightful in the decomposition of the tomb. To think that a being who is young, beautiful, and strong will become in a few hours an object of horror for those who have loved him most. I have never been able to accept the idea of a complete destruction, especially since my sister's death."

"Does the Christian idea," she asked after a pause, "leave us before the same troubling mystery?"

"Certainly," answered Mlle de Larminat, "but for the Christian the idea is so different; for him,

death is the ransom of sin, and the corruption of the flesh, which is so disturbing to your Majesty, is the expiation of it. As for the immortal soul, separated from its corruptible vessel and destined to live henceforth the higher life promised to us, why wish to know beforehand what this life will be? Would the Empress," asked Mlle de Larminat, "be pleased with the thought that after one or two thousand years her mummy might be put in a show-case in the British Museum?"

"No, of course," answered Eugénie with her usual animation; "but the idea of survival, which has haunted the soul of the Egyptians through so many centuries, gives this people a real greatness. There are few prayers more beautiful than this invocation to his judge from a man overtaken by death: 'Homage to thee, great God, Lord of Truth and Justice; I am come to thee, O my Master; I come before thee to contemplate thy perfection.' How beautiful it is! I have copied this invocation from the *Book of the Dead*."

The Empress very much wanted to linger on the Nile. Her incognito was everywhere respected, yet everything was done to make her journey easy, interesting, and delightful. She could do exactly as she liked, and it was a luxury she could not bear to forgo: her taste for caprice and adventure once more was free, and she became again the daring Amazon of her youth. At the Pyramids she rode off so swiftly on her white donkey that the Egyptians who were to follow on them were soon sitting on the ground.¹ Leaving the well-known places, she would push on where her fancy led her to hunt for a surprise; for comfort she would care nothing, careless what she drank or ate, and never tired; her one craving was to steep herself in light and warmth and space. Edfou,

¹ Private information.

Thebes, Luxor, Karnak, Gyzeh, Assouan, each displayed their sights, and day by day the Empress had news from Paris. A letter, picked up in the Tuileries after she had left them, shows that even there she was busy with politics.

"I feel thoroughly convinced that continuity of policy is the only real strength," she wrote. "I dislike violent changes, and do not believe that it is possible to bring off a *coup d'état* twice in one reign. I am really talking at random, for I am preaching to one converted, and who knows more of the subject than I do ; but I must say something, if only to prove to you what you know already, that my heart is near to you both ; and if, on peaceful days, my truant mind loves to wander off into space, it is with the two of you I want to be when trouble and anxiety are near. Here, far from men and things, there is an atmosphere of peace which does good to the soul, and I am apt to fancy that all is well because I know nothing." ¹

3

It was on November 16 that the Empress and her suite arrived at Port Said. Pennants flew on every ship, and cannons fired a salute that it seemed to those on the Imperial yacht as though thunder were bursting over their heads. Eugénie was now approaching the zenith of her career. The great project which had fascinated the imaginations of merchants and adventurers since the time of Marlowe, the plan to unite the wealth of India and all the gorgeous East with the Mediterranean, had, in the face of fierce opposition, been accomplished by the genius of her cousin, Ferdinand de Lesseps, assisted in more than one crisis by her own supporting enthusiasm.

¹ Filon : *Memoirs*.

Walt Whitman in *Passage to India* has pictured this project in its vast significance as one with the Pacific Railroad :

A worship new I sing,
 You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,
 You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,
 You, not for trade or transportation only,
 But in God's name, and for thy sake, O my soul.

This was a fitting enterprise for a Spaniard to inaugurate : it completed the dream of Columbus. " A project which halved the distance between Europe and India, and which therefore, in the rich exchange of commerce, offered to both immense accretions of wealth, was to be realised, in a brilliant ceremonial, in the midst of a dazzling vision," so Lesseps himself wrote, " sparkling with shimmering Oriental and African costumes, mingled with Western uniforms, Circassian and Hungarian magnates, mufties in green caftans, and officers of the Indian army, the French sovereign was the cynosure of all eyes ; . . . all this incense and honour were offered to the Empress simply as representing at one and the same time a great country and the triumph of civilisation." ¹

At Port Said the Empress had been received by the Emperor of Austria, the Crown Prince of Prussia, and the Prince of the Netherlands. On a tribune on the shore a Muezzin had called on Allah ; the Canal had been blessed by the Bishop of Alexandria, Bauer had made a flowery oration, and a great display of fireworks had been reflected in the water. The next morning, with the Empress and Ferdinand de Lesseps on the bridge, the *Aigle* was in the van of the fleet, which sailed slowly through to Ismailia. There a wild Oriental scene awaited them. Hun-

¹ De Lesseps : *Memoirs*.

dreds of Arab horsemen, with their burnouses flying in the wind, waved their carbines in the air, firing as they shot past, and in the midst of clouds of smoke and dust they threw themselves into feats of dexterity with the swiftness of lightning. Other Arabs sent their djerrids flying through the air to where they rebounded from shields of buffalo skin. Besides, there were howling dervishes, some holding between their teeth a red-hot coal, swallowing live scorpions, or piercing their cheeks and tongues with skewers, while fakirs chanted that "God is great."

At the Ball in the evening, given at the Viceroy's Palace, a great crowd glittering with orders—sheikhs in caftans with ornamented belts of gold or starred with jewels—showed the Empress a sight which rivalled the picturesqueness of either her own Court or the Sultan's.

Next morning the Empress saw the gala fleet drawn up in the harbour of Ismailia. For two whole days she had been quivering with emotion, and at that moment she actually felt that she personified the triumph of France. The blazing Egyptian light gave the impression of a more than earthly splendour to the coloured fleet. Fifty ships with pennants flying awaited the *Aigle* at the entrance to Lake Timsah. Once again she took the lead. The Khedive, the Emperor of Austria, the Crown Prince of Prussia, Prince Henry of Holland followed, each in their yacht, at not less than a cable's length. To the Empress the scene seemed so portentous, and proclaimed so gloriously the greatness of the Imperial government, that once again her baroque spirit thrilled with baroque emotions. For the last time she felt that a great future was in store for her son, and she prayed that the heavenly Power would send her strength in the task which would weigh upon her

if the health of the Emperor failed to improve.¹ After arriving at Port Said she insisted on sailing out in the Mediterranean, which meant disaster to her Sèvres dinner service and prostration to her liveried servants.²

4

When she came back to Paris she found that the Emperor's energy and decision were waning rapidly,³ and no one knew from what quarter disaster might come. Eugénie faced again a cloud of problems that meant the gathering of the storm. In themselves they were but congregated vapours, but let the vapours be heavy enough, and the electric forces tense, and from them might well burst the thunderbolt and the flood. Thunder was in the winter air and made the summer more oppressive. The sky was overcharged. But, as not seldom before winter comes, there is for a short time a peculiarly glowing serenity in the air, as though the sun itself had come nearer.⁴ And such outwardly was the last summer at St. Cloud—America's Indian summer. Apprehension was mocked by the brilliance of the weather and by the unruffled dignity of the Court. The Empress had never seemed more admirable. "*J'emportai*," wrote Nisard, the Academician, "*le souvenir aimable et imposant de tout ce qu'un grand cœur peut donner d'esprit à une femme et inspirer d'idées de bien public à une souveraine digne de son rang.*"⁵ (48) It was not until late in June that there were any signs of a crisis; for who could dream that the fate of France hung on the intrigues in Madrid?

¹ Private information.

² Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

³ F. O. France, Dec. 21, 1869.

⁴ La Gorce : *Histoire du 2^de Empire*.

⁵ Nisard : *Souvenirs*, ii. 413.

IX

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

*Es fürchte die Götter
Das Menschengeschlecht !
Sie halten die Herrschaft
In ewigen Händen,
Und können sie brauchen,
Wie's ihnen gefällt.*

*Der fürchte sie doppelt,
Den je sie erheben !
Auf Klippen und Wolken
Sind Stühle bereitet
Um goldene Tische.*

*Erhebet ein Zwist sich,
So stürzen die Gäste,
Geschmäht und geschändet,
In nächtliche Tiefen,
Und harren vergebens,
Im Finstern gebunden,
Gerechten Gerichtes.*

GOETHE : *Iphigenie auf Tauris.*

The gods be your terror,
Ye children of men !
They hold the dominion
In hands everlasting,
All free to exert it
As listeth their will.

Let him fear them doubly
Whome'er they've exalted !
On crags and on cloud piles
The seats are made ready
Around the gold tables.

Dissension arises :
 Then tumble the feasters,
 Defiled and dishonoured,
 To gulfs of deep midnight ;
 And look ever vainly
 In fetters of darkness
 For judgment that's just.

N. L. FROTHINGHAM: *Metrical Pieces* (Translated and Original)., Boston, 1855.

I

THE destiny of Eugénie was linked with the throne of Spain, as it was with the Bonapartes. It was the collapse of Queen Isabella which dragged the Empress to the cliff. Prim and Serrano headed the dominant factions in Madrid, and negotiated for a new sovereign. Prince Alfred of England, Amadeo of Savoy, and the Duc de Montpensier were all suggested, but between Bismarck and Prim negotiations, perhaps intrigues, were pushed on in favour of a Hohenzollern candidature.¹ The Spanish Succession, which had made one great war, and had again disturbed Europe in 1846, was now growing ominous to Europe from a quarter very different from that of Louis Philippe. With a rising Prussia on one side, a German sovereign on the other, and Italy on the third looking for French weakness to secure the downfall of Rome, the Empire would be in a very weak position.

The French diplomats made every effort to have the candidature of Leopold of Hohenzollern withdrawn. Benedetti, the Emperor's Ambassador in Berlin, interviewed the King of Prussia at Ems on July 9, and found the King saying that his interest in the affair was rather a family one than a political. But the French were getting excited : the war party pressed on preparations in the arsenals, and were

¹ Moritz Busch : *Bismarck : Some Secret Pages of his History*.

already demanding mobilisation.¹ In Germany, too, war undoubtedly suited the mood and the ambitions of Bismarck and Moltke as it had done in 1864 and 1866. The French Government played into their hands. Although Leopold had withdrawn his candidature for Spain on July 12, the Duc de Gramont, with the concurrence of Ollivier, worked up by their craving to impress French opinion, made the demand, which seemed reasonable enough,² but which in fact turned out to be superfluous and dangerous, that his candidature should never be renewed. When Benedetti had seen King William, the King had been gracious enough, though of course he would not pledge himself. When Napoleon, however, asked for a personal letter from the King, Benedetti was not allowed another interview.

Up to that time the French had gained their point. Bismarck, though manœuvring for war, had been outwitted. But now the French, represented by Gramont, gave their advantage away. To what extent had the Empress any hand in that which was to be her doom?

For ten days Bismarck's mind had been moved by strange agitation. There was something about the Spanish intrigue which had disconcerted him. He loved to raise the curtain on a tableau, and kept the cords always in his own hand. But this time, as La Gorce wrote, the curtain was raised before he had coached the actors or arranged the scene. He was at Varzin on July 6, and in the following days, noticing with increasing satisfaction that Paris was

¹ See F. O. 27, No. 738. Lyons to Granville, July 12, 1870.

² On July 13 Gramont wrote to Lord Lyons: "We require the King of Prussia to forbid the Prince of Hohenzollern to retract his resolution: if he does so the whole matter is at an end" (English Blue Book, No. 3, 1870, No. 70).

getting excited, he came to Berlin. On July 12, when Leopold withdrew his candidature, he planned to return to Varzin ; but when he heard that the French were still fuming he hung back at Berlin, and thought out his plans, ready to act with the swiftness which so oddly contrasted with his Prussian temperament. As Lord Loftus wrote from Berlin to Lord Granville, Bismarck insisted that Gramont should soften his arrogance or there would be trouble. It was at this point that Bismarck received the fateful telegram from his King, or rather from Abeken, his private secretary. The telegram said that the King had received a definite answer from the Prince, and that there was nothing more to say to the Ambassador. "His Majesty leaves it to Your Excellency to decide if Benedetti's new demand and its refusal should be given to the Ambassadors and the newspapers."

Bismarck received the telegram at five in the afternoon. Moltke and Roon had come to have an early Prussian dinner. The telegram marked a tense situation, not a rupture, and its mildness so destroyed the excited confidence of the three men who wanted war that they could neither eat nor drink. They read the telegram over and over again. Bismarck settled on the concluding phrase. If the announcement were manipulated the right way, might not the tone be made provocative? ¹ Moltke told him that the army was ready for immediate war. *A national war against the hereditary enemy would alone consolidate the Reich.* Bismarck pressed on to the decision which will identify his memory for ever in

¹ Lord A. Loftus, British Ambassador at Berlin, to Lord Granville, July 13, 1870. "Count Bismarck and the Prussian Ministry thought that the behaviour of the King at Ems was too moderate, and that the negotiations might take too conciliatory a turn" (British Blue Book, No. 3, 1870).

the history of Europe with the old theory that patriotism is enough, the decision which, making the Reich while it destroyed the Empire, strengthened the spirit which led to the maiming of Germany itself fifty years later. Abeken's telegram was before him. "I added nothing, I altered nothing," he wrote later. "I simply made a few suppressions." Quite so ! All he did was so to manipulate it as to make it sound insulting. Moltke was delighted : "That gives it quite another sound," he said. "Just now it sounded like a parley, but you have made it a trumpet-call in answer to a challenge." So given to the Press, and so communicated to the Embassies, it would, answered Bismarck, be "a red rag to the bull of Gaul." The three men settled down again : their appetite had returned.¹

2

The altered telegram, which by intentional publicity to the King's refusal to receive the Emperor's Ambassador was, as Gramont said, an insult to the French people, had its inevitable effect. The public excitement was so great, and so much irritation existed in the army (so wrote Lord Lyons to Lord Granville²), that it became doubtful whether the Government could withstand the cry for war even if it were able to announce a decided diplomatic success. It was felt that when the Prussian article appeared in the evening papers it would be very difficult to restrain the anger of the people. The people and, still more, the army were in a mood to force war on any government.

The French Ministers played into the enemy's hands. Still headed by Ollivier, divided between

¹ La Gorce : *Histoire du 2de Empire*. Moritz Busch : *Bismarck : Some Secret Pages of his History*.

² F. O. 27, No. 765, July 14, 1870.

arrogance and panic, the Government allowed itself to be worked up by the excitability of the masses, by the spirit of the Legislative Assembly, and by the truculent tone of the newspapers, and then threw the blame upon the sovereigns.

Eugénie, dominated by the memories of Sadowa, was in the high excitement of a patriot on the verge of war. Impressed on the one side by the generals, who boasted the strength and preparedness of the French army; misled to some extent by the personal friendships of the Austrian and Italian Ambassadors, Metternich and Nigra, to think that she might count on their support; ignorant of the extreme seriousness of the Emperor's illness, and the fact that the crises of torture caused by his stone in the bladder made movement dangerous and riding impossible, she, in spite of misgiving and apprehension, was carried away by the fierceness of popular feeling, and by faith in her own abilities as Regent, to speak in an uncompromising tone to Napoleon, to Gramont, and to Metternich. She in no way sought to hide the truth.¹ It was said by Thiers, and repeated by Pierre de la Gorce, that she threw her weight on the side of war. "It is my war!" she was supposed to have burst out. The accusation cannot face comparison with the records of the Foreign Office or of Queen Victoria's letters.² Le Sueur, the Charge d'Affaires at Berlin, who saw her on his return, also denied it.³ The truth is that both the sovereigns united with the people in the desire to avenge an insult, and in the confident hope of victory. With the Crimean War Eugénie had had nothing to do, and

¹ Unpublished journal of Marquise d'Espeuilles.

² See 2nd series, i. 460, 466. British Blue Book No. 3 of 1870. Lord Lyons' Letters.

³ MS. letter in Palacio de Liria.

she had opposed the war of 1859; she had exerted a steady influence in favour of stability in Europe, and she knew that the one chance to restrain Bismarck passed after Sadowa. But she had not the strength now even to temporise, and Gramont was all against it. So Bismarck and Moltke got their way. On July 19, France and Germany were at war.¹

¹ Though he attempted afterwards to deny it, Bismarck had definitely proposed the candidacy of Prince Antony of Hohenzollern to Prim. See *Aus dem Leben Königs Karl von Rumänien*; Abeken, *Ein Leben in Bewegter Zeit*; General von Persen, *Aus Unterlassenen Briefen und Aufzeichnungen Zusammengestellt*. Moritz Busch, in *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*, writes: "He denied his letter to Prim until I reminded him that I myself handed it to the General at Madrid. The whole Hohenzollern candidacy was represented as a private affair of the Court, and he was obliged to confess that it was discussed at a session of the Council of Ministers." This passage exists in the English edition of Busch, which came out first: it was suppressed in the French and German editions. In addition to this, it must be noticed that Bismarck kept his negotiation secret. See Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an Ex-Minister*, p. 664; on p. 665 occurs, however, the passage: "Gramont told me that the Empress, a high-spirited and impressionable woman, made a strong and most excited address, declaring that 'war was inevitable if the honour of France was to be maintained.'" Metternich also describes her on more than one day as "*très montée pour la guerre*" (V.N.A., quoted by Harold Temperley). This is corroborated by du Barail, and in *Le Maréchal Canrobert*, iv., by G. Bapst; also in *Prévost-Paradol*, by O. Gréard, but Gramont himself writes nothing to support it. It refers to a discussion at St. Cloud on July 14, in the presence of the Ministers.

The Empress, however, was not present at any meeting of the Ministers until the morning of July 15 (Ollivier, *Empire Libéral*), and even if she were, the Government had pledged itself to consult the Chambers (Ollivier, *Empire Libéral*). "The Empress and her Cabal were for war," says Ollivier. He does not say she is responsible, nor who her Cabal was, but "if any one man in France can be accused of having brought on the war, that man is Thiers." Nothing can really alter the fact that, though the actual declaration of war was the prerogative of the Crown,

"*Jamais*," said the Empress, "*je n'ai vu commencer une guerre avec un pareil serrement de cœur.*"¹ (49)

But on the evening of the very day when she was appointed Regent, July 23, the Empress, taking her two nieces with her, went down to Cherbourg to inspect the fleet which was to sail next day for the Baltic. The town suddenly flew all its flags, and a vast crowd poured into the streets and wharves. Once again—and for the last time—she was greeted with shouts, with trumpets, and with cannon. The weather was brilliantly clear. She was taken across the harbour to the flagship, where the Admiral's staff was presented to her. The Admiral made an enthusiastic speech. "We are accustomed," he said, "to see our Empress come forward whenever there is a danger to affront." The Empress thanked him warmly: then with her strong voice she read the Emperor's proclamation, putting a vibrant emphasis on the final words about the flag signifying the spirit and honour of France.² A great shout greeted these words; and Eugénie's voice failed her. She could only shake the Admiral's hand, and send a telegram to the Emperor about the enthusiastic spirit of the whole affair in the blue unclouded weather.³ It was her last respite from disaster.

A few days later the Emperor had called the Senate to the Tuileries and addressed them in the *Galérie de Diane*. They had come full of enthusiasm: France in 1870 was under a responsible parliamentary Government of which Ollivier was the head.

The Emperor was thoroughly averse to war (Lord Newton, *Life of Lord Lyons*, i. 296). The Empress was not so. But the evidence so far available, no matter how carefully weighed, does not suggest that she took, or indeed could have taken, any responsible step.

¹ Unpublished journal of the Marquise d'Espeuilles.

² Dom Herment's MS.

³ *Papiers secrets des Tuileries*. 2^{me} livraison.

they met a man weighed down by dejection, a man who, if he could, would already have treated with the enemy. Those who had been living near him knew how much anxiety and regret were teaching him already what he had to lose. Everything was failing him. While Germany was united, his own allies had deserted him, and every fresh telegram which came to St. Cloud told him that men were short or munitions lacking.¹ He greeted them with words which froze them: "We are about to commence a long and arduous war."² And then on July 27, forty ladies and officers of the household were invited to drive to say good-bye to the Emperor and the Prince. In the afternoon the little Prince had his hair cut, and donned his uniform and his sword. Then he threw himself in his mother's arms. She insisted on a photograph of her boy as he was to leave her for the front.³

Next day, to avoid a further visit to Paris,⁴ they took their train, which was drawn up outside the Porte d'Orléans. The Empress, who, imperious and charming, had prophesied success with feverish eagerness, drove down with her husband and son to the little station at the gate of the park of St. Cloud, where since the morning the luggage had been piling up. Dignitaries, courtiers, intimate friends pressed around the Emperor, deferential, yet full of real sorrow at saying good-bye to one who had been so simple and so kind. Though the Empress had controlled her agitation, a feeling of melancholy was in the air. In spite of the July day, thick clouds had paled the light, and already a few withered leaves were scattered on the sand of the avenues.

¹ La Gorce, vi. 338-40. ² Filon: *Recollections of the Empress*.

³ A. Martinet: *Le Prince Impérial*.

⁴ Carette: *Souvenirs Intimes*.

Listen (a voice seemed to say),
 The wind is rising,
 And the air is wild with leaves.
 We have had our summer evenings,
 Now for October eves.

It was more than sad, said an eye-witness : it was mournful. In the intervals of silence, the awkward phrases of uneasy politeness sought in vain to stifle premonitions of anxiety. The little Prince was crying. "Don't think it's because I'm afraid," he said to his cousin, Doña Luisa ; "it's sorrow at seeing how it hurts mother."¹ The Empress traced a large cross on the forehead of her boy, and, tense rather than affectionate, called to him as the train moved off that he must do his duty. The Emperor's eyes wandered vaguely in every direction, and saw nothing : at times he would murmur kindly expressions of vague and melancholy courtesy. There was a cry of "*Vive l'Empereur !*" Eugénie was never to hear it again. While the Emperor looked over the outlines of Paris at the monuments of glory, and back to St. Cloud, which was so soon to be destroyed, the Empress, who was driving back there with Princess Clothilde, covered her face in her hands and wept.²

3

The Empress now settled at St. Cloud to govern France once again as Regent. It was to be a very different experience from that of 1865, and still more from that of 1859. As Regent, she cared neither for documents nor routine ; she had nothing to do with files. She used her own resource as a woman for two ends : to unite conflicting parties in one enthusiasm for France, and to seek allies among the

¹ A. Martinet, *op. cit.*

² La Gorce : *Histoire du 2de Empire* ; Du Barail : *Memoirs*.
 A. Filon : *Le Prince Impérial*.

Foreign Powers.¹ But Bismarck, by allowing *The Times* to publish the secret treaty which Napoleon had foolishly discussed with him after Sadowa, when Bismarck had led him to believe that he was willing to let France have Belgium, had turned all Europe against the Empire. The Empress, convinced that the official files would disprove Bismarck's allegations, asked Ollivier to produce proof of what Cowley knew—that the offer of Belgium had been made by Bismarck.

Eugénie needed first to still criticism from the newspapers. She sent to Ollivier's secretary, Adelon, not to be too severe on *La Presse* and *Le Rappel*, and she made a special appeal to Paul de Cassagnac. As for the Foreign Powers, she soon found she could do nothing with England. Lord Granville, the Foreign Secretary, who had been in Paris, hid himself and vanished, and Lord Lyons kept well out of the way. Prince Napoleon was sent to Victor Emmanuel. Count Fleury was instructed to intervene with the Czar. The Empress tried her own powers of persuasion on Richard de Metternich: and indeed she planned to go to Metz to report the result to the Emperor. She soon had news which showed her that that was impossible. Meanwhile she had had to agree to withdrawing the French troops from Rome.²

On the next day but one after Napoleon left, Eugénie received from him a letter which, as she said long after, broke her arms and legs. Nothing, he said, was in readiness for the advance; everywhere there was quarrelling, disorder, confusion. The Emperor's plan had been founded on quick mobilisation, a swift attack, for he knew as well as all of the German superiority in numbers. His plan had been to cut Germany in two, and hope for Austrian support

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

² Ollivier: *L'Empire Libéral*.

in the south, where she might avenge Sadowa. As soon as the Emperor got to Metz, he saw that this plan was hopeless.

When the Abbé Pujol arrived at St. Cloud as chaplain, on July 31, he noticed that the tears poured down the cheeks of the Empress, and that at dinner, in spite of her thirty guests, she did not hesitate to wipe them with her napkin. Her niece, who was sitting opposite, wept too.

She was fiercely anxious about her boy. When Admiral Jurien said that the Prince was mad with excitement and joy, the Empress said between her teeth, "*Ce diable d'enfant ! Ce diable d'enfant !*" (50) Then she burst out, "Oh, how ungrateful children are !" Nevertheless she was quivering with pride. That evening the Austrian Ambassador dined at St. Cloud. She talked at the top of her voice, and only of her boy. "He will be lucky," she said, "like the Bonapartes. He came under fire in August, which is their month : he has been present at a favourable action. Nothing has happened to him or to his suite. I am sure that he is *sacré*. I knew that there was going to be an engagement to-day : you see how I can keep secrets."

Prussia had armed pirates, it was said. "They will be hung at the yard-arm, and it will be perfect."

"One mustn't hang anybody," she answered. She did not want reprisals.

Then her mother's mind rushed back to the Prince.

"He won't be handsome," she said ; "he will only be distinguished."

There was a chorus of protest.

"Come, ladies, don't be downcast," she said. "I do not say he will be ugly ; but there is not much shape in his nose, nor has he fine eyes. He will have a good carriage."

Metternich, wearing the grand cordon of the Legion d'Honneur, smiled. He took up his glass, and smiled at the Empress before he drank. Diplomacy forbade the neutral to say more. During the dinner a storm burst over the Château.

On August 2 the Empress, after a day of tense anxiety, heard that the Prince Imperial had received at Saarbrück his baptism of fire. "Louis has kept a bullet which fell close to where he was standing," said the letter. "Some of the officers wept when they saw him so cool." This emotionalism struck even the French of 1870 as excessive. The next day, August 3, followed in anxiety: the Empress was dreary and sat at dinner with her chin on her hand. On the 4th the priest, as he was saying Mass for St. Dominic, the patron saint of the Guzmans, heard her sighs and sobs. That evening the Spanish Ambassador sat at dinner on the right of the Empress, who had heard of the check at Weissenburg. She was worn out physically and morally. Often she had difficulty in breathing, and it required a great effort to keep up conversation.¹

The mother's heart was bursting: after dinner she led the chaplain into an alcove. "I am good for nothing," she said, "if a telegram doesn't come, and I am quite overcome. I am more wife and mother than Regent, and yet I want to sacrifice all for France. The happiness of France, that is all I wish." She had just had a letter from Tristan Lambert, who was with the Prince: "Three times," he said, "I heard the balls whistling past my ears; the first time I took off my *képi*, and saluted. My first thought was for God: then the noise of the rifles and the

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1929. This first appeared in the *Figaro*, Aug. 26, 1894, and was criticised as an over-dramatic account. Dom Herment's MS.

cannon, the excitement of the soldiers, and the smell of powder excited me, and I felt I was at a review."

"He thought first of God," the Empress said. "I am glad of it: is it enough?" Next morning she kept the priest waiting till 10.15 before she appeared for the Mass. But she still had no news. It seemed quite terrible that the Prince should have written to Filon before he wrote to her.

On August 6, after the Council, the Empress was the personification of grief. Toilet and charm were laid on one side, and "her sorrow," said Pujol, "was one with the simplest kindness."

As soon as he came back from Notre Dame des Victoires, where she had sent him to pray, the Empress rushed towards him. "Tell me the truth," she cried. "What is happening?" He could tell her nothing. She went back sobbing to her own apartments.¹

Worse news quickly followed. Weissenburg was the first reverse and caused a panic. A rumour of victory was the next cause of agitation, almost more dangerous than defeat if it proved false. Though the Empress tried to persuade herself, and by telegram to persuade her husband and her son that she was confident,² she began to notice curious coincidences which filled her superstitious mind with presentiments. On everything which surrounded her she saw the signs of death.

She awaited in anguish the fatal message which a secret sense warned her was coming: and one day, lunching at St. Cloud after a Council, the Ministers noticed tears running down her cheeks. On August 6, Lepic went to St. Cloud to obtain the Empress's signature to a decree to put Paris under martial law,

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1929.

² Comtesse des Garets: *Auprès de l'Impératrice Eugénie. Derniers Télégrammes de l'Empire.*

and Ollivier wrote begging her to return to Paris with all the troops at her disposal. The troops at her disposal were 160 men at the dépôt of the Guards. The Empress, finding that the Ministers were tending to ignore her and to refer direct to the Emperor, had retired to her room at St. Cloud, deeply depressed. In the dead of night came a cipher telegram with the words : " Our troops are in full retreat: nothing must be thought of now beyond the defence of the capital." Another followed immediately, telling of the defeats at Reichshofen and Forbach, which meant the loss of Alsace and the invasion of Lorraine. The Marquis de Piennes went to break the news to the Empress in her room. In a moment she was up, had torn the telegrams from his hands, sent a copy of them to the Ministers, given precise orders, and called together an immediate Council at the Tuileries. " The dynasty is lost," she said ; " we must think only of France."¹

A quarter of an hour later, pale and dressed in black, she had returned to the salon where the ladies were still waiting. Princess d'Essling held out her arms in tears. " No sentimentality, I beg you," said the Empress sharply. " I need all my courage." She sat down on a window seat looking on the Park. She was waiting for the Austrian Ambassador, whom she was expecting from Bougival. As soon as she heard the wheels, she leapt up, and was in the carriage the moment that it drew up at the entrance to the Palace, and drove out into the brilliant summer night.²

She arrived at the Tuileries at about one in the morning. The great salons, shut up for the summer

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*. Filon, *op. cit.* Ollivier : *L'Empire Libéral. Derniers Télégrammes*.

² Comtesse des Garets : *Auprès de l'Impératrice Eugénie*.

and draped in dust covers, looked peculiar and ghostly as the hastily awakened servants passed through them carrying candles. The Ministers, amazed by their nocturnal summons, gathered there with a great fear. They met a woman of unwavering resource and energy : she was as calm and tense and strong as she was resolute and clear. " You are like a heroine in Corneille," said Admiral Jurien, but she was more.¹ She neither argued nor reasoned, but the deep energy of her blood, enhanced by training in hardship, leapt instinctively to meet the crisis. Despairing of the throne, she must maintain order in her tumultuous and menaced capital. At seven next morning, August 7, she heard her Sunday Mass in the Chapel at the Tuileries, before carrying on further negotiations with Ollivier, whom she summoned to call the Chambers together ; and with the help of Lézy-Marnésia she prepared a manifesto : ²

" People of France," it read, " the war has begun unfavourably for us. We have met with a check. Be firm in the presence of the reverse, and let us make haste to repair it. Let there be among us but one party, that of France ; but one standard, that of national honour. I am here in the midst of you ; and, faithful to my mission and to my duty, you will see me first in the place of danger to defend the flag of France. I adjure all citizens to maintain order : to trouble it is to conspire with the enemy."

4

On the Monday morning, August 8, the Regent and her Ministers had to face the fact of a Parlia-

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

² *Le Moniteur*, Aug. 8, 1870.

mentary revolt. An able Breton, General Trochu, had returned to Paris with some idea of taking over the Ministry of War, and with theatrical prophecies of revolution. On the same day the Empress heard from the Prefect of Police, Pietri, that the Emperor had no longer the strength to command the army. What then was he to do? Come back to Paris? If one idea struck Eugénie as fatal it was his return; the representative of the Bonapartes leave the battle, to seek refuge in a disgruntled and seething capital—no, never that! Meanwhile her mind was full of the crisis. The portfolio of war was offered to Trochu, who said he would take it only if he were free publicly to criticise the supreme command. "Gentlemen," asked the Regent of her Council, "such a condition at such a crisis, can we accept it, at the moment when the enemy is threatening us, and is ready to take advantage of our domestic dissensions? I leave you to judge." She had sent instead to Lyons for Palikao.

On the Tuesday the argument about the Emperor's return waxed fiercer. Ollivier insisted that nothing could be more fatal to the campaign than his presence at the front. Chevandier supported him: they pointed to Pietri, whose tears, they said, were more eloquent than any of their words. But they could not move Eugénie. Her words were broken with sobs, her tone was that of a sublime despair, but her decision, upborne by rage and pride, was inflexible. "He can't come back beaten, before a battle." When they wearied her down, and she appeared to give way, Persigny and his party (for he had sacrificed his old enmity) came to her support. She insisted on the appointment of Palikao.

As the day wore on, there was increasing excitement around the Palais Bourbon. Masses of work-

men from the factories, and from the lower quarters of the town—all the elements of revolution and disorder—had been gathering round it. Pietri had taken his precautions. But though there was no actual disorder in the street, there was intense disquiet within the Chamber, where those who came hesitating had gone over to the left, and where revolutionary orators from outside the Chamber had found an entrance. During the afternoon the Government fell. Ollivier himself, knowing that he could not meet the Chambers as she had urged, had argued for a new *coup d'état*, arresting the leader of the Opposition. On this Eugénie was clear. "You imagine that the people will stand it?" she exclaimed. "You don't see that you will unloose civil war over the whole country, civil war under the fire of the enemy. No, Monsieur, as long as I am Regent that will not be done." Ollivier was disconcerted. "Your Majesty is doing something revolutionary," said even Filon, her secretary, when she dismissed Ollivier's Government. "For Heaven's sake don't sign that." Her answer was, "*Tant pis*. My conscience bids me sign. I will explain to the Emperor later."¹ Desperate, unflinching, absolute, she determined at any cost to rally what was left to her of French resources.

She had already, though at Ollivier's instigation, exceeded her constitutional powers in placing Paris under martial law. Plans rushed through her anxious and exhausted brain and troubled her late into the night. Coffee was her constant stimulant, chloral became her only means of inducing sleep. At two on the morning of the 9th she had sent for Filon, and again discussed the problem of the Government. Worn out for want of sleep, she proposed taking

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

more chloral. He went rather to fetch her some broth from the kitchens, but when he came back he found that she had used her own remedy and was asleep. Metternich, on August 10, wrote that the Empress was under no illusions about the fragility of the dynasty, but was admirably calm and courageous. But "*Quel cauchemar*," he concluded, "*et quel avenir que cette omnipotence de Bismarck !*"¹ (51)

The Empress had recalled General Palikao from his command at Lyons and, when Ollivier fell, asked him to form a government, which she inspired. In all these things she, of course, exceeded her constitutional powers, and the Emperor, finding himself ignored on the one side by the generals and on the other by his Regent, felt himself desperate and powerless. But Eugénie felt in no way unequal to the situation, and coldly dismissed Ollivier's ministry, while with Palikao, she arranged a government which could command confidence.² It worked with the energy of desperation, and in a few weeks had put 270,000 more men into the army of defence. Supported by the old protagonists of absolute monarchy—Persigny, Baroche, Vaillant, who were the real powers, and who now haunted the Tuileries—it soon learnt efficiency. Palikao was one of those quiet men who know how to carry others with him. When he first spoke in the Chamber of Deputies they found him difficult to hear. A cry of "Speak louder!" arose. The General pointed to his neck bound by a thick black stock. "Excuse me," he said, "I have here a bullet which has never been extracted, and which worries me a little in public speaking. But if you will take the trouble to listen, I assure you that you will hear me."

¹ V.N.A. Omitted by Professor Oncken.

² Dom Herment's MS.

After the new Government was formed, there was a quieter week, broken, however, on the 14th, by an attempt at insurrection at La Vallette. The fête of the dynasty, August 15, passed grimly by. "The Empress shows pluck but not hope," wrote Lord Lyons on the 16th.¹ On the 17th, however, a day before Gravelotte, she was woken at two in the morning to hear that General Trochu, who had been to see the Emperor, was being sent back to Paris as military governor and to prepare for siege.

Trochu was a Catholic and a Breton, but with sufficiently advanced ideas to make him acceptable to Prince Napoleon. An able officer, generally well informed, and with a mastery of his specialities, he was known as a grumbler. When offered a post he would refuse it, but, unable to bear seeing any one else in it, he would covet it again afterwards. He was one of those uncomfortable people—particularly odious when employed by a government—whose passion is to improve things. "I should like to redress that error," he would often say. He posed as the "victim of a bad régime," and indeed he was thoroughly out of sympathy with the Empire, even while he swore allegiance to it. And when it fell he became one of its severest critics. "His mental activity," said Du Barail, an admirer, "had developed in him the critical sense which is the adversary of tradition, which joins to character to combat it, which leaves the man without a guide in the face of a crisis, and results in passiveness." But the Empress and her entourage, who afterwards compared him to Tartuffe, knew enough of him not to welcome his appointment, though they could hardly doubt his loyalty to his engagements.

¹ Lord Newton : *Life of Lord Lyons*.

Though Trochu arrived in Paris at dead of night, he was taken at once by Chévreau, the Minister, and Admiral Jurien de la Gravière to consult the Empress. She had no wish to receive him. "He is not one of our friends!" she cried. But the Admiral spoke hotly in his favour.¹ "Embrace him, Madame," said the Admiral. "He's a good fellow." The Empress saw before her an upright figure in a tightly-buttoned uniform, a large bald head, lumpy features behind an imperial dark around compressed lips, restless grey eyes which had a squint in them, and a very fidgety manner.² She glanced at him, then listened quietly. Trochu stiffened and bit his moustache, while he prepared to argue that the Emperor and his army should return to Paris. "No, General," she answered, "he will not come back to Paris. He would not enter the Tuileries alive. Only the enemies of the Emperor could advise this return to Paris." "Then," said Trochu, "I am one of them." "The Emperor," said Eugénie, "will remain at Chalons. Do you know," she went on, "that fifty armed men could come straight into this room and murder me without any difficulty. But they do not attack me. Why? Simply because I do not defend myself, and they know that if I disappeared the Empire would still remain. But imagine the Emperor in this palace. It is the trap in which sovereigns are caught. What would happen to him?"³ She drew herself up against the wall and faced Trochu, who prophesied disaster. "But what am I to do?" she cried. "Give me some ideas. We must at any price save France." Then she buried her face in her hands. Suddenly she seized Trochu's arm.

¹ Dom Herment's MS.

² Carey : *With the Empress Eugénie*.

³ Filon, *op. cit.*

"General," she said, "I feel inclined to recall the Orleans princes. What would you think of that?" She would have done anything.¹ Paris, she knew, was seething with revolutionaries. If they attacked him as they would, either the army would defend him, and there would be civil war, or else the troops would desert him and there would be a massacre, "In either case," she asked, "who will be the gainers? The Prussians."

The Empress was absolutely determined that wherever the Emperor went, he was not to come near Paris, and she drew up a rough draft of a letter which followed the telegram they immediately sent off to Napoleon at Chalons. It was very vigorously worded. Filon tried to soften it, but only partially succeeded. "Do you think," said Eugénie, whose mood was getting desperate, "that I am not the first to feel all that is horrible in his position. But the message you propose would not stop him, and if you do not stop him, he is lost." She knew that the Emperor had had another nervous breakdown as he had in the fateful days of 1866. It was even rumoured that the nerves of the Prince Imperial had given way. Eugénie saw Metternich, and he attempted again to have the war stopped.²

When she met the Council of Ministers, she threw enough emphasis on her own opinion as to the Emperor's movements to sound responsible for their decision. Palikao was in entire agreement with her; and between them they determined to force a decision on Napoleon. Rouher was sent to Chalons to tell the Emperor and Macmahon that they were ordered by the Minister for War to march on Sedan.

¹ Unpublished MS. of Henri Chévreau, quoted by Herment.

² V.N.A. Unpublished.

So, on August 19, Napoleon, after long indecision, took his fate into his own hands, and in a desperate attempt to combine with the army of Metz under Bazaine, began to march on Sedan. Meanwhile Paris remained comparatively quiet and, August 26, the position appeared in Metternich's opinion stronger.¹ But, in fact, owing to the movement of the armies, it was becoming every day more hopeless. Bauer had come back to urge the Empress to make financial provision for flight. She had thought it better to send her jewels over to Princess Metternich, who sent one of the men in her Embassy with them to London to lodge them in the Bank of England. Although she would from time to time visit the hospital (she had established one in the Tuileries), or busy herself in having art treasures removed from the Louvre to Brest, her main preoccupation was to preside at the Council of the Ministry; her courage, her energy never failed. "*Elle me fait l'effet d'une sainte*," (52) wrote Mérimée, but there were times when the thought of her responsibility was horror. Her nerves became every day more tense. She wore every day the same beige dress, she still failed to sleep, she ate nothing, and the pallor of exhaustion marked her drawn face, which became almost expressionless. A sob, she said afterwards, was always in her throat.²

5

From day to day she heard of the movements of the Emperor and his troops. The telegrams seemed to reassure her. But she was more concerned about the movements of the Prince Imperial who was

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

² Carette : *Souvenirs Intimes*.

wandering from Mezières to and from Maubeuge accompanied by a few officers and by men of the Emperor's mounted bodyguard. The Emperor wanted to make sure of the boy's safety: he was still only fourteen. Eugénie felt that she must be most concerned to think of the place he was taking in the drama of war. On September 1, she wrote to Charles Duperré, his senior A.D.C., that they must not wander with the Prince from town to town. "Each one of us," she wrote, "must carry out to the limit of his power the hard duties which are imposed on us. My heart is torn but resolute. I have had no news of my husband or of you since yesterday. I am in terrible anxiety; but I wish above all things that each of you should do his duty. Always remember one thing: I can weep for my son dead or wounded, but to think of him fleeing! I could never forgive you if you allowed such a thing to happen. I appeal to your honour as soldiers. I will exonerate you and take all responsibility. We shall hold out in Paris if we are besieged; or, if we are out of Paris, we shall still hold out to the end. There can be no question of peace."¹ But the letter was never sent, for Duperré came to Paris next day to take the orders of the Empress. On September 2 the Emperor had capitulated at Sedan.

She did not know that evening, nor did she know the next morning, but rumours had begun to circulate.² "The Empress," wrote Metternich on September 2, "is worn out with travail of mind and heart. The day before yesterday she said to me

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

² Welschinger's statement that she knew of the surrender on Sept. 2 (see *La Guerre de 1870*) is conclusively denied by E. Herment. *Revue des Questions Historiques*, vol. viii. p. 313 ff.

that the whole night long she had kept saying to herself that she was mad, that all she had heard was not true, that it was only the work of a disordered brain. She was so convinced of it that in the morning when she rose she burst into tears at the despair of finding that she was not mad.”¹

6

The fall of Sedan was first known to the Opposition members of the Chamber of Deputies. The Empress first heard of it from Chévreau who brought her the Emperor's telegram. He entered the salon where she sat with two of her ladies.

“Madame,” he said, “I need to speak with you alone.”

The Empress, finding herself alone, and shocked at the demeanour of Chévreau, cried out: “*Qu'y-a-t-il ?*”

“*Il faut que votre Majesté s'arme de courage : les nouvelles sont mauvaises.*”

“*L'Empereur est mort ?*”

“*Plut à Dieu qu'il fût mort, madame : l'armée est prisonnière, l'Empereur est prisonnier.*” (53)

The Empress was overwhelmed and sank down : Chévreau took her in his arms and put her in an arm-chair. For ten minutes she remained inert.

“Madame,” he said to her, “nevertheless Your Majesty has no right to surrender to your sorrow. You owe your strength to France. So far no one knows of this disaster, but soon they will know : they will dethrone you before to-morrow. You absolutely must take measures. The Governor of Paris is the only man who can perhaps save you. Appeal to him. Let me take him the Emperor's telegram.

¹ V.N.A. Unpublished.

It would not be well if he learnt it from any other than me, and he will be flattered to see the Government fall in my person."

"Go," said the Empress, "and do what you like." She was worn out.¹

She tried not to believe what she had heard. But as she realised that it must be true her fury became uncontrolled. The years of patience through infidelity, the warrior blood of Spain, the weeks of tense anxiety, the overwrought nerves, the sense of despair at foiled ambition, the mother's zeal for her son combined into a cataclysm of indignation. Conti and Filon met her at the head of the winding staircase which led down to the Emperor's apartments from her own. She looked like a Fury. Her fine features were distorted, her pallor accentuated, her eyes were like rapiers. "Do you know what they are saying?" she hissed at them. "That the Emperor has surrendered! Capitulated! You do not surely believe this abomination?" The two men were so appalled by her manner that they could find no words. But the question was repeated in a tone of more vehement menace.

"Madame," Conti stammered, "there are circumstances when even the bravest——" Eugénie cut short his words. A torrent of abuse and contempt broke from her. The words she spoke were incoherent: they were mad. For five minutes they continued. The men listened, stunned, as though on the margin of an avalanche. A terrible insane devastating force swept all the growth of sentiment and decency and beauty in one fierce annihilation. Filon said that they remembered nothing but the sound of words. When she had finished, the Empress left

¹ Unpublished MS. of Chévreau; *Revue des Questions Historiques*, vol. viii. p. 336.

the room and went down the winding staircase to the Emperor's apartments.¹

7

Once the storm had passed, her mind turned again to confront disaster with decision. She must preside at a Council and take energetic steps. The thought that had come to her before she left St. Cloud that the Bonapartes could no longer reign was clear enough now; but she clung to her engagements, and kept a clear sense of the needs of France. She could not envisage the country with any centre but herself. The Council after an indecisive meeting broke up at eight in the evening. The Empress now seemed dazed. She neither ate nor talked. From time to time she would murmur: "The army captured! The Emperor a prisoner!"²—the words seemed to hypnotise her.

Meanwhile she decided to interview Trochu about the state of Paris. Chévreau was sent to fetch him and received the amazing answer that the General felt tired and had not had his dinner. The fact was that when Trochu came in at eight o'clock from the inspection of the forts, he learnt of the fall of Sedan. He learnt also that, according to the orders of Palikao, not he but his subordinates were charged with the defence of the city. His situation was a difficult one, and General Schmitz advised him to resign.³ But Trochu could hardly resign in the face of danger. He became swiftly the prey of a deep resentment, so that when Chévreau arrived to ask him to protect the Empress he remained in a

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

² Paléologue: *Entretiens.*

³ *Enquête sur 4 Septembre*, ii. p. 282.

sulky impassivity. He busied himself with strengthening the forts, saying that he must put his country before his sovereign.¹ Such an answer at such a time sounded like revolution, and Trochu had been in fact conferring with the revolutionary leaders. But of this the Empress could not know. When Chévreau asked her what Trochu's answer was, she replied shortly, "He has not come."

She heard that the Deputies had gathered at midnight for a night's sitting, but that the Ministry had refused to attend. From midnight till two in the morning, crowds moved from the Rue de Rivoli to the Place de la Concorde calling for revolution. Among the lights and movement the Tuileries remained dark like a shadowy island in the midst of a sea of fire. Clamour floated to the silent windows, and seemed at times to menace immediate assault. But the crowd had melted away before birds sang in the summer dawn through the blue mist which bathed the garden by the river.

On the morning of September 4, 1870, Eugénie rose at seven. Half an hour later she heard Mass in the chapel with some six or seven of her suite. After she left the chapel, Filon came up to her and suggested that she leave for Blois or some other city in Touraine.

"That would mean civil war," answered the Empress. "The strength of our resistance would be

¹ Trochu : *Œuvres Postumes*, i. pp. 177-180. It was asserted by Thiers that in this extremity the Empress, through Mérimée and Metternich, had applied to him for help. The Empress denounced it to M. Paléologue as a lie. Deliberate or not, the statement was false. Mérimée and Metternich, whether advised by the Empress or not, had conferred with Thiers some time before. M. Dreyfus thinks that Thiers' memory had failed him. See *Histoire de la Révolution de 4 Septembre : Déposition de M. Thiers*, Paris, 1895, et *M. Thiers contre l'Empire*, by R. Dreyfus, pp. 113-4.

broken in half—and for what end? He who has not Paris has nothing. No, I shall not move from here.”

“Your Majesty then will defend yourself?”

“I shall not move, but I shall not permit a shot to be fired.”

One idea stood clear in her mind: the need for unity in France—a unity which she expected to centre in herself and for which, if necessary, she must sacrifice her life—for revolution was now leering at her from close at hand with all the significance that revolution in Paris had to a mind steeped for years in the memories of Marie Antoinette. The restless imagination of disordered nerves pictured unspeakable indignities.

Meanwhile she visited the hospital in the Palace and telegraphed to the Countess of Montijo in Madrid:

“Keep up your courage, dear Mother. If France wishes to defend herself, she can do it. I shall do my duty.—Your unhappy daughter,
“EUGÉNIE.”

Early in the morning, there was to be a Council of Ministers, but when all were assembled, they had still to wait for Trochu, who at last did come. “*Madame*,” he said to the Empress, “*voilà l’heure des grands périls! Nous ferons tout ce que nous devons.*” (54) What he meant by this, if anything, he tried to explain in a private interview in which he renewed his promises and protestations of devotion. “*Et puis, Madame?*” Chévreau asked as she entered the Council afterwards. She had no answer but a look and gesture which asked for sympathy but did not promise hope.

The first subject she had to debate with the Council was the speech which Favre had made during the

night in the Palais Bourbon, urging that Napoleon III should be deposed. The Prefect of Police expected an insurrection. Some thought, as Filon had thought, that the Empress should return to the Loire. But it was pointed out that this would surrender Paris to the mob, and here the Empress found the majority of the Council in agreement with her. "*Il faut tomber sans encombrer la résistance*," (55) she said. Trochu had said once to the National Guard that they should maintain "in the supreme agony that tragically proud attitude which alike became men, citizens, and soldiers," and he had repeated the remark in a Council. "*Mon Dieu, Général*," answered the Empress, "one dies as one can." "General," he had been asked by a Minister, "if the Regent were attacked, what would you do?"

"I should lay down my life on the steps of the throne."¹

8

At the end of the morning, attended by Admiral Jurien and Madame de la Poëze, the Empress received a deputation from the Legislative Assembly headed by the Republicans Daru and Buffet. She sat in the *Salon Bleu*, which adjoined her own apartment, and received the deputation graciously. Buffet spoke first. He said that he thought the Chambers would depose the dynasty unless the Empress would of her own accord place the power in the hands of the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly would then nominate a provisional government which could function without prejudice to the dynastic question. What was asked, in fact, was that the Empress should at least for the time being abdicate. Daru followed Buffet, who spoke strongly in the same sense.

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

Eugénie listened quietly till they had finished. Calm, and almost gracious, as she listened, she did not now lessen the dignity of her demeanour. She spoke fluently and easily, but with a force that implied a flooding reserve within.

"Gentlemen," she began, "you tell me that I can make the future safe if now, at the hour of the greatest danger, I desert the post with which I have been entrusted. I cannot consent to that; I dare not. Of all things to-day, I care least about the future; I mean, of course, not the future of France, but the future of our dynasty. The times through which I have passed, gentlemen, have been so painful, so horrible, that, believe me, at the present moment the thought of preserving the Crown for the Emperor, or for my son, counts with me for very little. My one care, my one ambition is to fulfil completely the duties which have been imposed on me.

"If you think, and if the Legislative Assembly thinks, that I am an encumbrance, and that the name of the Emperor is a stumbling-block, not a support and a centre for defence, then let them pronounce our deposition; I shall not complain. In that case, I could leave my post with honour, I should not have deserted it.

"But I am convinced that my honour and my duty, and, above all, the interests of the country in the presence of a triumphant enemy, require that the integrity of the Government should be maintained, that the representatives of the country should rally round me and my Government, to leave for the time being questions of party on one side, and for us all to unite our efforts to meet the invasion."

The Empress cited the examples of the Cortes de Cadiz who remained true to their captive king and who then saw the final triumph of their cause.

"As for myself," she continued, "I am ready for every danger, and I will follow the Legislative Assembly to any place where it may organise the defence: and even if defence breaks down, I could still be useful in obtaining the most favourable terms of peace.

"Yesterday, the representative of a great Power proposed to me to secure the mediation of neutrals on these two bases: integrity of French territory, and maintenance of the Imperial dynasty. I answered that I was disposed to accept it on the first basis, but I energetically refused it on the second. The maintenance of the dynasty is a matter which concerns France alone, and I will never permit a foreign Power to interfere with our internal affairs."¹

9

When the Empress stopped speaking, there was a certain confusion. Her argument had impressed them not less than her calm demeanour. Buffet himself declared that if he had felt it was still possible for them to rally round her, he gladly would. "Do you think," she asked again, after a time, "that it is a pleasure for me to hold on to the powers of Government?" She gave a hint of the change she felt between the acclamations that had once greeted her and her situation now. She suggested that if to strengthen the defence she surrendered her power, she might be invited to stay in Paris to share the sufferings and dangers of the city.

But Daru took up the argument. "You fear, Madame," he said, "that you would be deserting your post, but you will give a great proof of courage in sacrificing your interests for the public good and

¹ Evans: *Memoirs*.

sparing France the horrors of a revolution in the face of the enemy."

At last she wavered. "It is not the way I look at it," she said, "but I leave personal considerations on one side. I only want things to be constitutional. If the Ministers agree with you, I shall not oppose them."

"Then may we announce this to the Assembly and to M. de Palikao?" asked Buffet.

"Yes," she answered, "you may go and do so."

As they passed out, each kissed her hand, and Buffet, it was said, had tears in his eyes.

X

THE FLIGHT INTO STORM

Me howling blasts drive devious ; tempest toss'd,
 Sails ripp'd, seams opening wide and compass lost ;
 And every day some current's thwarting force
 To set me still more distant from a prosp'rous course.
COWPER.

I

ON the afternoon of September 4, after the Empress had dismissed the deputation that had asked her to abdicate, she waited in her suite in the Tuileries to hear the result of the conference with General de Palikao, and what steps the Assembly would take. From moment to moment fresh dispatches arrived, now from the Ministry of the Interior, now from the War Ministry, now from the Prefecture of Police. Each was more ominous than the last. The mob had invaded the Chamber of Deputies, and the insignia of the Empire were everywhere being defaced or destroyed. At last a messenger arrived to say that the eagles on the great gates of the gardens that opened on the Place de la Concorde had been torn down, and that the rioters were forcing their way into the enclosed garden of the Palace. The Empress remained unmoved.

At last her attendants in the Palace became seriously alarmed. Trochu had abandoned her, perhaps betrayed her. The shouts of the insurgents became clearer and clearer, and the Guard might at any moment be overwhelmed.

At last three of the Ministers arrived : Busson-Billault, Jérôme David, and Henri Chévreau. Entering the salon where the Empress was still standing, they reported that the mob had taken possession of the Chamber of Deputies, and that the Deputies themselves were going over to the Revolution. Paris was already in the hands of the mob. "Ah," said the Empress, "in France one has no longer the right to be unfortunate."¹ In terror for her safety, they implored her to leave the Tuileries at once. Her firmness was still unshakable. She considered that the war depended on her maintaining a firm front. "Here I have been placed by the Emperor," she said, "and here I will stay. To abandon my post will weaken the power to resist the invasion. Unless there is some recognised authority, the disorganisation will be complete, and France at the mercy of Bismarck."

It was now nearly three o'clock in the afternoon. Hurling themselves on the enclosed garden with the shout "*Aux Tuileries ! Aux Tuileries !*" the mob sounded more and more ominous, nearer and nearer, into the big salon of the Empress. At this moment Nigra entered with Metternich, and demanded an immediate audience with her. They insisted that she was in the greatest danger. The mob that had assaulted the Chamber of Deputies was now ready to attack the Imperial Palace. Resistance was impossible, and if she stayed longer, it would be to risk her life. Indeed, had they but known it, the mob was at that moment being held back by the argument that she was no longer there, and General de Mellinet, accompanied by Ferdinand de Lesseps, was arguing with the crowd that all were responsible for what was a national possession. Neither Ambassadors nor

¹ La Gorce, vii. 421.

Ministers found the Empress easy to convince. When Léon Chévreau entered, he found her still arguing. “*Venez, venez,*” she said, “here are these gentlemen pressing me to leave Paris—to flee!”

“Madame,” the Minister answered, “it is all over; the Revolution has won.”

“It is all over,” echoed she; “then that poor General Trochu must be dead!”¹

2

Metternich, usually so calm, grew excited, noisy, even abrupt; Nigra, who did not know her so well, retained the tone of formality, but he was equally insistent. The Empress went so far as to say she would consult Pietri, the Prefect of Police and one of her most faithful liegemen. “What do you think of the situation?” she asked him. “Are the Tuileries in danger?”² Pietri, who arrived towards three o’clock, was as clear as the others. As he came over from the Prefecture he had seen the mob storming the gates of the Palace. They might force their way in at any moment. If they did, they might massacre any one they met, and the Empress would endanger not only her own life but that of her suite. She sent for Metternich. “General,” she asked, “do you think the Palace can be defended without bloodshed?” “Madame,” he answered, “I do not think so.” “Then there is nothing more to do, for I cannot have civil war.” She had already given orders that the Guard should on no account fire on the people.³ Pietri had used the one argument which would weaken the Empress. In the face of

¹ E. Boucastel : *L'Impératrice et le 4 Septembre*.

² E. Boucastel, *op. cit.*

³ F. O. 27. Nov. 1814. Lyons to Granville, Sept. 7.

fear she never quavered. But she could not argue that she must endanger her attendants. Her ladies, the lovely creatures whom Winterhalter had painted, pressed farewells upon her—Vicomtesse Aguado, her mother's Spanish friend ; Maréchale Canrobert and Maréchale Pelessier, Madame de Bourgoing, Madame de la Bédoyère. But there was no time for emotional farewells. She turned to Chévreau :

" *Est-ce possible ?* " she asked. "*Avez vous bien vu ? Avez vous bien entendu ? On n'a donc plus d'amis en France quand on est malheureux.*"

" *Madame,*" answered Chévreau, falling on his knee, "*mon frère et moi vous montrerons qu'il y a des gens que le malheur attache plus que la toute puissance ! Où vous irez, nous irons.*" (56)

The Empress could not bring herself to move : her eyes caressed the thousand loved objects she had gathered there. "You must hurry," urged the Italian Ambassador ; "in a few minutes escape may be impossible." They drew her away with them, saying, "We will be responsible for her."

"But where are you going ?" cried Chévreau.

"Metternich will tell you," answered the poor woman. She bowed to all present. "Thank you," she said ; "good-bye"—and the door closed behind her.

A cloak, a hat, a veil were held out by Madame Lebreton in the next room. She was offered no time for packing or for plans. They felt that she must leave the Palace at once, and as she was. Half an hour had gone by since the two Ambassadors arrived. She walked out of her private room and through her apartments. As she looked round at a hundred objects that were dear to her, she asked herself, "Is this the last time ?" And then, taking the lead, she went down the great staircase to take

her carriage. But Metternich feared for the livery and the crown which marked it.

He offered his own carriage instead. As young Conneau went off to fetch it, the mob pressed nearer and clamoured at the gates of the courtyard. No one, he saw, could pass out that way. Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, who was with them, went across to the gates to hold the mob in play. Meanwhile the little procession had again climbed the great staircase to escape through the Louvre. Passing again through the apartments of the Empress, they entered the long suite of rooms which led from the Pavilion de Flore to the galleries of pictures. When they came to the door of the gallery, however, they found it locked. They knocked, but there was no answer. As they waited, they heard still louder the savage cries of the crowd around the Palace. It looked as if their only retreat had been cut off. There was a general feeling of dismay. But after a few minutes Charles Thélin, who had opened the prison gates at Ham for Louis Napoleon to escape, and had been made Treasurer of the Emperor's household, appeared with a bunch of keys. Among them was one that would open any door in the Palace.¹

The Empress now led the way through the long gallery of the Louvre to the Salon Carré, and thence to the Salle des Sept Cheminées. The little procession had been increased by attendants from the Louvre till it had become dangerously large. The Empress, with the force that always marked her character, decided that it must disperse, and thanking them all for the loyalty they had shown her, she turned with Metternich and Nigra to the room containing the Greek antiquities. As she looked she

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress.*

found herself facing an immense canvas. It was the masterpiece of Géricault, the *Wreck of the Medusa*, one of those pictures which aims not at being beautiful, but at telling a whole story. On wild seas, over which storm-clouds were blown fiercely by the wind, some twenty figures, some of them naked, were crowded on a raft beneath a bellying sail. While some had sunk in exhaustion or death, another group with feverish energy had torn off their garments to wave to a schooner on the horizon. Never was the conflict between despair and effort conveyed with more passionate drama. The Empress, looking at it, saw in it the picture of her country's crisis—and her own.

Descending the three great flights of steps that lead to the Egyptian remains, they passed through the funeral monuments of the Pharaohs to the door opening on the arched passage which leads from the Inner Court of the Louvre to the Place St. Germain-les-Auxerrois. But here a new danger faced them. The crowd was surging through the archway into the courtyard of the Louvre.

From time to time the Ambassadors opened the door to squint through. Wild shouts against the Empire and the Empress came through the aperture. "*Vive la République! A bas l'Espagnole!*" The Ambassadors feared for the Empress. Was she afraid? "Not in the least," she answered. "Why do you ask me? You are holding my arm. Do you feel me tremble?" She asked the very question which Louis XVI had asked when the mob invaded the Tuileries in 1792.

When the crowd had passed through the archway, the Empress saw her opportunity, and said, "Now let us go."

"I think we had better wait a little longer," pleaded Nigra.

"No, no," the Empress answered. "*Il faut de l'audace*," (57) and as she spoke she pulled open the door and stepped out in the archway. "The dignity, courage, and firmness," wrote the British Ambassador, "which Her Majesty had displayed in so remarkable a manner during the whole of the trying period of a month which she had gone through, did not fail her at the last."¹

3

Hurrying out into the Place St. Germain, Metternich came on a closed fiacre drawn by one horse. Facing the passers-by, they went across to it, and as they went, a boy recognised her. "*Voilà l'Impératrice !*" (58) he called out. Nigra silenced him. Metternich meanwhile hurried the two ladies into the fiacre, and Madame Lebreton gave the address of M. Besson in the Boulevard Hausmann. The two Ambassadors had thought of nothing but getting the Empress out of the Palace. Their chivalry, which might better be called panic, ended in placing her in a common cab. They knew no more. And the remnant of the Court remained in absolute ignorance of what had happened to her.

The cab turned into the Rue de Rivoli and, passing the Louvre and the Tuileries, it drove alone into a great mob who poured down the street ; and so on into the Rue de la Paix, and across the Central Boulevards to the quieter quarters between the Madeleine and the Gare St. Lazare, to the Boulevard Hausmann. But on arriving at the apartment of M. Besson, which was on an upper floor, the Empress and her attendant found themselves nonplussed. They rang again and again. No one answered. It was now about four o'clock. Many minutes had

¹ F. O. 29. Sept. 9. Lyons to Granville.

passed. The patience of the Empress was becoming exhausted, and she could not sit idle. She walked back with Madame Lebreton into the street, and at last found a fiacre. It was an open one, but they did not fear recognition in the deserted streets. When they found the fiacre they had still to ask themselves where should they go. Madame Lebreton thought that the revolutionaries would respect the flag of a republic. "Let us go," she said, "to the American Legation. Mr. Washburn will protect us."

"Mr. Washburn?" said the Empress. "The American Legation? No, I will go to Dr. Evans. He is an American too: and besides he is an old friend. I am sure he will not hesitate to help us in any way he can."

So the Empress and Madame Lebreton drove up the Boulevard Hausmann to the Étoile, and across to where Dr. Evans lived at the corner of Avenue de l'Impératrice and the Avenue Malakoff: they arrived there towards five o'clock. They rang the bell, and the gate opened. But there was only a servant at home. He told the ladies they might come in and wait in the library, however, till Dr. Evans came back.

4

The early days of September are often some of the most delightful in the year in Paris. And when Dr. Evans set out, on the morning of the 4th, from his house in the delightful avenue leading to the Bois de Boulogne, the avenue by which the Empress was accustomed to pass to her drives, and which in fact bore her name, the serene clearness of the weather gave no hint that a tragedy into which he was to be himself drawn was that day to change the course of

history. The bells chimed in the distance, and the birds twittered among the trees and lawns. But the news had not been good, and at nine Dr. Evans went off to his work in the house of Prince de Beauffremont near by. At three in the afternoon, as he drove down the Champs Elysées, he noticed nothing to suggest an unusual disturbance. The birds still twittered, children were playing on the shaded walks or being drawn along in little wooden carriages to which goats were harnessed, and well-dressed people were moving about as usual both in carriages and on foot. It was only when he reached the Place de la Concorde that he saw signs of commotion. He saw across the Seine a mass gathered on the steps of the Palais Bourbon, and another clamouring for entrance to the gardens of the Tuileries.

But he kept his engagement to meet Dr. Crane at his office in the Rue de la Paix at four o'clock, and drove past the Madeleine and the Boulevard Malesherbes to the Parc Monceau. He did not get back to his home till nearly six o'clock, when he stopped to give an order about a dinner-party he was having that evening.

As he went in, his servant told him that two ladies, who refused to give their names or to say why they had come, had been waiting for him in the library for more than an hour. As he entered it, he found to his immense astonishment that he was in the presence of the Regent of France.¹

5

"Perhaps you are surprised to see me here," she began. "You know what has happened to-day: the Government is in the hands of the revolutionaries."

¹ Evans : *Memoirs*.

She had been obliged to leave the Tuileries suddenly, almost without warning, without any preparation. "And I have come to you," she said, "because I trust fully in your devotion to my family. The service I now ask for myself and for this lady with me will be a severe test of your friendship."

Evans, in the charity of his heart, did not hesitate. He would be only too happy, he said, to help her in any way he could, and to protect her. He would hold himself entirely at her service, and would be willing to do anything necessary to secure her safety.

She spoke again of the greatness of the change in her life and ways of life. "You see I am no longer fortunate," she said. "The evil days have come, and I am left alone." She had had indeed her summer evenings : now for the wild leaves, the rising wind, the chill dusks of the fall. When she had finished speaking, her eyes were full of tears.

So far the American had scarcely spoken ; he had been too much absorbed in hearing what had happened to her, why she had come to him, and what she wished to do. Indeed he hardly needed to ask questions, so directly and simply did she say all that was wanted to show him exactly what had happened. She sat in a deep arm-chair, and as the evening light, which was gradually fading, fell on her pale face, marked by strain and fatigue, her beauty looked to his admiring eyes even more distinguished than before. The old doctor was deeply touched. His reverent sympathy for a lovely woman's calamity was tinged with pride in being himself chosen to defend the Empress of the French in a danger that no one could deny. Her self-control was perfect, but for the one thing that she could not sit still. She knew that she was in danger from the mob, who had been influenced by the intrigues which tried to make her

responsible for the war. She feared search and arrest from the promoters of the Revolution. The example of Marie Antoinette was ever before her. And she was thoroughly worn out.

Meanwhile it was almost time for Dr. Evans's dinner-party to begin, and the guests might arrive at any moment. He hurried back to Crane, told him what had happened, and asked him to act as host. Evans himself returned to confer with the Empress, who meanwhile had been able to take a little food. Her idea was to cross to England by Havre, and she thought of taking a train that evening at Poissy, a station between the Gare St. Lazare and Pontoise ; but as Evans pointed out that was too dangerous. She must avoid public conveyances. Her features were known everywhere, and she was quite unable to disguise the distinction which marked her whole personality. Evans's wife was still at Deauville. He knew the neighbourhood, and knew his wife could help. They decided therefore to start early next morning in the doctor's own carriage, and find relays of horses at Nantes, Evreux, and Lisieux. The Empress had with her an authentic British passport which had been left for visé at the Prefecture of Police. It was to enable an English doctor to pass with a lady patient. Crane was to impersonate the doctor, and the Empress the patient, while Evans gave himself out as her brother, and Madame Lebreton as her nurse. When these plans had been made, the Empress retired to her room.

But the quiet night was to her not the least of horrors. Then, for the first time, the knowledge that anxiety had stifled breathed its tragic breath. Now she realised the meaning of that day. What had seemed like a dream was no dream. Her husband was a prisoner ; her son's fate unknown ; her

responsibilities had been swept away; homage, majesty, dominion, crown, treasures, home and her dearest, all were gone; to face the personal danger of the immediate future, she had nothing left to her but courage.

Evans meanwhile had reconnoitred in the direction of the Porte Maillot, and found that carriages moved in and out without examination. He and Crane sat up all night to keep guard for the woman whose safety hung upon their care.

6

Dawn had hardly spread its clear serenity in the morning sky when Evans knocked at the Empress's door; and the little party took coffee and rolls. All were dressed as they were the evening before. The Empress wore a black dress with a narrow white collar, and over it a thin waterproof cloak; dark gloves, and a round black Derby hat, with a thick black veil. Neither she nor Madame Lebreton had any change of clothes whatever; nor had the Empress either money or jewels.

They gave the coachman orders to drive the closed carriage to St. Germain. Driving down the Avenue de la Grande Armée, they noticed the streets being swept, and the milk carts and market wagons coming in. The guard stopped them at the Porte Maillot and looked into the carriage. Evans, leaning out of the window, explained that they were driving out to spend the day in the country with friends. He held up a newspaper between the guard and the Empress. The man was satisfied, and as he leaned back he heard the carriage rumbling over a drawbridge which had been constructed across a moat, newly dug to defend the city against possible siege. Outposts and

sentries were passed, and the little party felt an immense relief to know that they were safely out of Paris.

As the clear morning air came in through the windows, and the first hint of gold showed in the leaves, the charm of the scene in that early hour reassured them with its sense of peace. Yet at every turn they had fresh reminders of royal history in France. The Château de Neuilly had been the favourite of Louis Philippe. At Rueil were the tombs of Josephine and Hortense. Then came Malmaison.

As they drove on, the spirits of the Empress rose, and she talked freely of what was in her mind. "They asked me to abdicate," she said, "but how could I?" How could she, who was appointed Regent, abdicate a sovereignty not her own? For her own part she had no objection; she was willing enough to hand over to the people her power as Regent. But was there ever a moment when the Regency was more necessary? The one thing to consider was the military situation, the power of the army to resist the enemy. In the defence of the country she was ready to assist any one, whoever it might be, if they had the confidence of the country.

It looked certain as though in a few weeks Paris would be besieged. And perhaps what wounded the Empress most was that she should not be able to lead the defence. Such a risk and such a sacrifice were just what appealed most to her. She had more of Jeanne d'Arc in her than of Marie Antoinette.

"I could have been of service in many ways," she cried. "I could have been an example of devotion to my country. I could have visited the hospitals. I could have gone to the outposts to encourage and stimulate the defence at every point of

danger. Oh, why could they not have let me die before the walls of Paris ? ”

In a few moments the mood of the *exaltée* was succeeded by logical argument. She was, she argued, in no way responsible for the war. It was *not* her war. It was the policy of Germany that jeopardised the prestige of France : and it had been precipitated by those who were trying to rise to power on the ruins of the Empire. Such, went on the Empress, was the French character. It was brilliant, but it lacked steadfastness. They were versatile, but volatile. They love glory and sunshine, but judge principle by success : and a reverse of fortune unsettled their view of their sovereigns. In France one was acclaimed one day, banished the next. They set their heroes up on pedestals of salt which, at the approach of storm, melt down into the mud. In no country in the world is the step so short from the sublime to the ridiculous. Government after Government in the last hundred years had ended in revolution and a flight. “ Only a few days ago,” said the Empress with a laugh, “ when they were talking of the Empire falling, I said I would never leave the Tuileries in a cab, like Charles X and Louis Philippe —and that is exactly what I have done ! ”

Moving with the abrupt changes of overwrought nerves from incidents on which she commented with the most amusing originality to melancholy, and at times to tears, she had told them before she reached St. Germain of the terrible despatch from Sedan. “ He is a prisoner, and I am flying. It seems like a horrid nightmare.”

7

At St. Germain anxiety took another turn. There was the octroi, and Evans had determined to use,

if necessary, the name of his friend, Lady Trotter. But the octroi was not concerned with the freight of this carriage, and in a short time they were in the Forest of St. Germain. Twelve miles before Nantes, as they stopped at a wayside cabaret, Evans bought some good *vin du pays*, cheese, a bottle of wine, and a bologna sausage, which the Empress cut off with her pocket knife to eat with the bread, which she said was excellent. Just as easy, as simple, as natural as at her own table, she adapted herself perfectly to the situation. Indeed, this sort of thing was really what she liked. She loved to face events, and met the flight with the same sense of enjoying adventure as when a year before she had mounted a camel in the desert. At Nantes they changed their carriage and horses, and Evans picked up a paper.

As they drove on, he explained what he had read in it. A Republic had been proclaimed at the Hôtel de Ville. Favre had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gambetta Minister of the Interior, and Trochu *head of the Government*.

Trochu ! "Impossible !" exclaimed the Empress. "I cannot believe it ! How could he go over to the Revolutionists after the declarations of loyalty he made to me ? How could he betray me ? Only yesterday morning, spontaneously, of his own free will, he swore to me on his honour as a soldier, and his faith as a Catholic and a Breton, that he would never desert me, that whoever would harm me would have to pass first over his dead body." The man had spoken with such warmth that one could hardly doubt his sincerity ; he had loudly proclaimed his loyalty from the day he was made Governor of Paris. He had sworn that he would protect not only the Empress but the Palais Bourbon. "Whom could I have trusted," asked the Empress now, "if not

him?" The treachery of Trochu weighed on her mind more than all the rest of the Revolution. It gave her the keenest sense of her predicament. Instinctively loyal herself, she had had up to that time full trust in those around her. She herself never forgot a favour. She had never suspected duplicity or ingratitude in others. The promises of Trochu were to haunt her for months. "When I left the Tuileries," she kept on saying, "there was nobody of General Trochu there."¹

At about five, as they approached Cambolle, on a road lined with elms, the driver insisted on stopping to feed and water his horses outside the *Café Cantilope*; Evans had hardly got inside the café when he heard a vague roar of shouting, and realised that a crowd was approaching. As it came nearer, he heard a tune that was at that moment indescribably sinister—*La Marseillaise*—and it was punctuated by cries of "*Vive la France!*" and "*Vive la République!*" The Empress looked anxious; Madame Lebreton was terrified. But the noisy crowd was nothing more than a few companies of the *Garde Mobile*, full of wine and headiness, who were on their way back from a review at Evreux.

They went on, changing horses at La Commanderie before sunset at an old post-house. Shortly after sunset the whistle-tree broke, and the traces were dangling about the feet of the horses. The driver said he could not go on. In fact, he said he must go back. He could not repair the break where they were, he said, for he could not see in the dark, and he had nothing to do it with, and in fact did not know how to do it. Evans and Crane went into the matter for themselves and found that some rope or twine would piece the thing together. But where

¹ Paris American Register, Oct. 17, 1896.

were they to get it? They saw a box under the front seat, and found there an old halter which provided them with just what they needed to lash the whiffle-tree to the cross-bar. At ten o'clock they arrived at the *Soleil d'Or*, the little timbered inn of La Rivière de Tribouville.

Evans as before went in to reconnoitre. He was met by a buxom Normande of middle age who advanced from the pots and hooks of her open fire. Her name was Madame Desrats. Could he get a carriage to take him to Lisieux that night? he asked. "No," said Madame Desrats, for there was no such thing in the village. Could she give them lodgings for the night? "No," she answered again, for she had only two rooms, and they were already taken. Furthermore, there was no other inn in the village. But Evans showed his resource. He found that the lodgers were an English coachman and his family who were driving through to Trouville. He asked the coachman to come down, and offered him a large sum to give up his rooms, which the coachman, as he took it, said he was induced to do only for his deep sympathy with the poor lady whom he understood was Evans's patient.

Feigning a limp, the Empress came over from the broken-down calash in which she had been shut up for so many weary hours, and, with Evans before and Madame Lebreton following, walked through the big room of the inn and climbed the steep staircase to the room the coachman had given. Sinking into a chair, she burst out with a laugh. "Really this is too funny for anything!" she said.

In the middle of the night they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs, loud talk, and a hammering at the door. They peeped out, and discovering that they were not being pursued, they went back to bed and to sleep.

In the early morning Evans was up asking if he could get a carriage from Trouville. But why drive to Trouville, asked Madame Desrats, when there is a train going there from a station a mile away? "*Les Anglais sont tellement drôles.*" (59) Between waiting some hours for a carriage and risking the publicity of the train, the train seemed better, and at 8.25 they were in a compartment by themselves on their way to Lisieux. The Empress had noticed that the stationmaster opened the carriage door, leered at her, and shut it with a bang. She believed afterwards that he had recognised her and saved her.¹

When they arrived at Lisieux it was pouring with rain. None of them had an umbrella. Evans hurried ahead to look for a carriage while, to shelter from the downpour, the other three sheltered in a *porte-cochère* of a carpet factory. And there an hour later, drenched with rain, her skirt and shoes dirty, and turning aside to escape the drip from passing umbrellas, and looking utterly tired out, she was found still waiting by Evans. He could not help contrasting her present plight with the splendour of her reception at Constantinople not a year before.

8

In clearer weather they drove out of Lisieux, but they were full of fear of dangers at Deauville, first thinking that the ports would be watched, and secondly that Evans's wife would be under surveillance. So Evans went in by a side door to her hotel while he left the carriage outside the little town. He soon found that there was nothing particular to disquiet them. No one knew where the Empress was, and no plans had been made to visit on her the

¹ Miss Vesey's MS.

fate of Marie Antoinette. Evans arranged that she should shelter in his wife's rooms while he made inquiries about getting her across the Channel.

It chanced that Sir John Burgoyne ¹ had his yacht in the harbour. Evans went up and asked to be shown over the yacht, and at a certain point asked if he could trust Sir John with a confidence. "I am an English gentleman," replied the pompous young baronet, "and have been some years in the service of Her Majesty." Evans then told him about the Empress; of her escape from the Revolution; of her then danger; and of her wish to cross to England. Evans did not for a moment doubt his answer. But Burgoyne's chivalry lagged far behind his fussiness. The English gentleman regretted that he was quite unable to assist him in the matter.

It was true that there was a heavy sea running outside the little harbour, and that if they could not sail the Empress would be in a very difficult position on the little yacht. Evans put his argument another way. Might not the day come when Burgoyne would have been very glad to assist her? It was not every day that one could be of so great service to the Empress of the French. "Well, gentleman," said Sir John at this, "you can submit the matter to Lady Burgoyne. If she is willing to let the Empress come on board, she can come." They turned to her. "Why not?" she at once asked. "I shall be only too glad to be of any use to her, and I can understand how anxious she must be. Let her come on board as soon as she safely can."

At eleven that evening Burgoyne had covenanted to meet Evans in the lumber yard of the railway station: there they found him, hiding behind a pile

¹ Sir John Montagu Burgoyne, 10th Baronet; not F.-M. Sir John Fox Burgoyne, who had been often at the Tuileries.

of planks. "Could the Empress come straight on board?" Not till morning, thought Sir John; not till he was about to cast off and warp the yacht out. But Evans argued that they must get the Empress out in the dark.

Sir John still demurred. "It is a great responsibility you are asking me to assume."

"The greater the responsibility the greater the honour," said Evans. Burgoyne did not answer then, but in a short time announced that they would be ready for the Empress by midnight.¹

At 11.30 a young Russian he knew, "with a friend from Paris anxious to see a yacht," asked to see him. Sir John took his courage in both hands and showed them over, feeling little doubt that the Parisian was a spy who suspected something.² Mrs. Evans meanwhile had prepared a little package of changes for them, with some wraps, and at midnight the Empress—weeping now—went down with Evans to the yacht, listening to a rising wind and the distant moan of the sea.

9

No one could have been more gracious and sympathetic than Lady Burgoyne, who did everything she could to make the Empress and Madame Lebreton comfortable. A change of clothes and hot punch made them feel much happier. The Burgoynes had no more news than the papers could tell, but had heard rumours that a number of people had been arrested, and among them the Princess Mathilde. There was no news either of the Emperor or of the Prince.

Evans stayed on board, and the Empress sent back

¹ Evans : *Memoirs*.

² *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, vol. ii. p. 69.

some personal messages to her closest friends in Paris—they were in complete ignorance of what had happened to her. At seven in the morning the yacht took the open sea, and steered north-west. At about one o'clock, she met a violent squall, which took away their spinnaker boom. All steps were taken to meet the storm : the mainsail was reefed, they ran down the jib, and set the storm jib. The waves kept breaking over the decks, and the yacht with rolling and pitching not only terrified Madame Lebreton, but almost persuaded Burgoyne that he had better go back to France. At this point the Empress took charge of the situation. Always an excellent sailor, she had no fear then, and she determined that the course should be continued ; and by evening they had sighted the Isle of Wight.

That, however, was only the beginning of worse things. The night came down thick and dark ; the wind buffeted the yacht more fiercely over higher seas ; the rain fell heavy from thunder clouds amid flashes of lightning ; the waves slapped heavy on the sides of the *Gazelle* or broke more violently across her bows. It seemed again like the plight of the raft of the *Medusa*. Evans began to give up hope. Madame Lebreton thought that they were wrecked, and even the Empress, though she remained calm, and felt even a certain exhilaration in the thought, believed that the end had come.

But at four in the morning they were in the roadstead of Ryde, and at sunrise the Empress, after having thanked the crew and rewarded them with sovereigns, went ashore. Two days later she met the Prince Imperial at Hastings.

Burgoyne meanwhile was in no little trepidation at the thought of what he had done. Suppose it should be suggested that in some way he had really been

there to help the fallen Sovereign. Suppose he should even be accused of being "mixed up in foreign complications"! The thought was terrible. He decided to write a letter to the Private Secretary to the Queen and explain that it was all "pure accident," and that he had never heard the Empress's name so much as mentioned till Dr. Evans had come to him with the agitating proposal on which his wife had given her decision.¹

¹ *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, vol. ii. pp. 68-70.

XI

THE SAD TRANSITION

Strive we no more. Some hearts are like the bright
 Tree-chequer'd spaces, flecked with sun and shade,
 Where gathered in old days the youth and maid
 To woo and weave their dances ; with the night
 They cease their flutings, and the next day's light
 Finds the smooth green unconscious of their tread
 And ready its velvet pliancies to spread
 Beneath fresh feet till these in turn take flight.

But other hearts a long, long road doth span
 From some far region of old works and wars,
 And the weary armies of the thoughts of man
 Have trampled it, and furrowed it with scars,
 And sometimes, husht, a sacred caravan
 Moves over it alone, beneath the stars.

EDITH WHARTON : *The Mortal Lease*.

I

It was only a few days before the Empress had moved to the home of Miss Emily Rowles which the Emperor had already arranged for the eventuality of an exile. Camden House, a red brick Georgian house with cedars on the lawn and rooms of some dignity, had been prepared at Chislehurst, and there, after a short and uncomfortable time in a small hotel at Hastings, Eugénie moved, and established herself with the small suite—including her nieces—which had gathered together at Hastings. Her course was clear. It was to arrange things quietly in this new life, and at the same time to do all she could for the

defence of France. Bismarck, who saw in the Bonapartes a means of dividing the country, attempted naturally to make one proposal to her and another to the Republic. A mysterious agent, Régnier, arrived almost at once at Hastings to beg the Empress to treat with Bismarck through him, arguing that she should rely on the seven and a half millions who had voted in favour of the Empire earlier in the year, and also on the army besieged under Bazaine in Metz.

Was Régnier a spy? What was his link with Bismarck, who then believed that the Empire could ensure a firmer and more lasting peace than the Republic? These dark questions gathered like clouds, but dispersed before the light of cogitation, for if it had been possible to arrange a peace at once, the terms would have been far more favourable to France. An indemnity and a rectification of the frontier were offered as the terms at Sedan: Strasbourg and its environs were suggested on September 30 to Favre at Ferrières; they had hardened to Alsace and two thousand million francs on October 30. At the end of January it was Alsace-Lorraine and five thousand million francs. But this was the price the fickleness of the capital demanded from the country. Terms of defeat must have dethroned Napoleon, and have endangered any succeeding government. A firmer and more reasonable attitude towards the dynasty could alone have saved the invaded country in her trial, since Bismarck himself preferred not to unloose in it the forces of disorder which, in his philosophy, were not to be diverted from democracy.

The Empress knew the facts too well to be in doubt of either Bismarck or the French. The last time Régnier came to Camden she consented to see him, in the presence of Chévreau and Filon, and he re-

peated the terms of Bismarck. She had had many doubts as to his motives, and wanted in no way to commit herself. But there was something in Régnier and in his brutal and convulsive eloquence which could not be ignored. His glance was hard and searching, his jaw heavy, his rather rough face intelligent as well as resolute, his hair white and strong. He posed as a patriot ; though he had a passion for intrigue, he was in fact what he claimed to be, a Frenchman who believed that the terms Bismarck then was pressing were better for France than an obstinate struggle which could only strengthen the arrogance of Moltke and Roon.¹

He repeated Bismarck's offer. The army at Metz was to march out with all the honours of war into a neutral zone, and there the two Imperial authorities would meet to ratify the peace, a peace which, though it meant the sacrifice of some territory and some money, would not be disastrous. Régnier enlarged on the sufferings and privations of peasants hidden in the woods, without news and without nourishment. Why not make peace ? " Each day that passes costs France millions and tears away a piece of her flesh," he cried. " Remember the miserable date. Metz will fall on the 18th. Madame, save the army, and save France."

" Monsieur, I blame your conduct," answered the Empress, " but I render justice to your intentions. There is much truth in what you have said. Unfortunately, you do not seem to know your countrymen. They will never forgive one who gives up a portion of France ; they will always say, and their sons will say after them, that if only they had struggled to the end they would have triumphed ; and further-

¹ Dom Herment's MS. Cf. Régnier's own brochure, *Quel est votre nom ?*

more, the peace would not be recognised, and after the foreign war, we should have civil war.”¹

Régnier had hardly been dismissed, when Prince Napoleon came to Chislehurst a second time.

“The Palikao Ministry,” he said, “was a Ministry of idiots.”

“I do not know, Monseigneur,” the Empress answered, “what you mean by a Ministry of idiots, but what I do know is that the Emperor was served up to the end by good and faithful friends. For eighteen years we have seen you in opposition to the Empire: you and those around us have never ceased to undermine its foundations, and you go on the same way now the Emperor is fallen. If you had been at Paris on the 4th of September, you might perhaps have been able to give us good advice. But you were absent, as at the moment of danger you have often been, to your regret, I do not doubt.”

To this the Prince did not answer. He seized his hat, and hurried from the room.²

2

Nevertheless the arguments of Régnier had been gaining ground. Napoleon, now at Wilhelmshöhe, saw their force, and wrote about them to the Prussian headquarters, receiving a not unfavourable reply. But now the policy of the Empress wavered. On arriving in England, she had written to the Emperor of Austria and the Czar to intervene on behalf of France, and received their answers, which were perforce more courteous than precise. She was too diplomatic to take advantage of the courtesy or the

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

² *Daily News*, Oct. 27, 28, 29, 1870.

sympathy of the Queen or of the Prince of Wales.¹ So now she fell under the influence of the French die-hards, which were voiced in frenzied appeals from Tours. She believed that there was an army of the Loire which, though it could not reinstate her dynasty, could negotiate an honourable peace. She dreamt that the garrisons of Paris and Metz would together make a vast sortie, which would drive a wedge in the invading army. She still indulged the fancy of an intervention from Austria, or even from Italy. The frenzy of war had paralysed her judgment. Feverish, intense, she found in chimeras a solace for the inner torment of the desperate patriotism of war.

On October 19, Bazaine, still holding Metz, wrote to assure the Empress of his loyalty. General Frossard, who commanded an army corps, wrote also strongly urging that she should exert herself and treat for peace. These letters were brought by General Boyer, who arrived at Chislehurst on October 20. She saw in him the incarnation of the sufferings of an army, and decided first to sacrifice for its redemption both her pride and all claims the future might allow for resistance. She therefore sent a direct message to the King of Prussia proposing an armistice on the basis of the revictualling of the army.

By this time, however, Bismarck had come to the conclusion that the Empire was too weak to maintain a peace, and that he must not make the mistake of 1815, of dictating a Government to France, though he was still treating with both parties to keep them divided. To Eugénie he was urging peace, while carefully withholding from her what the terms were, provided she was again enthroned. At once she saw his design, and flamed with patriotic anger. "A

¹ Sir Sidney Lee : *Life of Edward VII.*

blank cheque!" she cried. "Must I give Bismarck a blank cheque? They are asking us to sacrifice our honour." The fury of her excitement, which made her emotions whirl till her judgment itself was giddy, embraced not only the Prussians but the garrison of Metz, who, it seemed to her, would compromise France to prevent their own surrender. And yet? Three hundred thousand soldiers of France, starving, could not easily be numbered as traitors. Boyer, silent, humiliated, but faithful through every trial, stood before her as an insistent plea to negotiate with them and for them. She knew Bismarck's misgivings about a republic. Anxious doubts goaded her first one way, then the other. She began to be driven back towards the very project which with scorn and anguish she had rejected. To hold back from a word for France when France was in anarchy now seemed impossible.

She made a rendezvous with Bernstorff at the Cowleys' house in Albemarle Street. As a result of this she sent an envoy to Bismarck, offering Cochinchina, an indemnity, and the surrender of Strasbourg with part of Alsace (how great was to be determined later) as the terms of peace. Bismarck rejected these. The envoy then proposed—subject to reference to Eugénie—to make Alsace a buffer State. But this also was refused. King William wrote to her shortly afterwards that the uncertainty of the Prussians as to the political dispositions of the army and of the people of France made it impossible to treat with her.¹

Almost simultaneously with this, on October 24, Metternich wrote from Tours, on behalf of the Provisional Government, to ask if she could prevent the fall of Metz while an armistice was arranged.

¹ Filon, *op. cit.*

He suggested that she would thus avoid a split among the French. He asked if she had sent an envoy to the republicans. To this she at once telegraphed an answer :

“ The capitulation of Metz is a matter only of hours. They have no food. Hurry on the armistice. I desire intensely to save this last army and bulwark of order, even at the cost of our hopes. You cannot doubt my ardent patriotism which makes me efface myself to-day whilst reserving my claim to our rights when peace is made.

“ General Changarnier had entrusted General Boyer with a message for M. Thiers. It is unfortunate that they could not meet.”

The next day, when she received a visit from Tissot to thank her on behalf of the Provisional Government, she discreetly declined to receive him. The day after that (October 27) Metz fell.

Boyer wrote to tell the Empress. She wrote an answer that opened all her mind :

“ MY DEAR GENERAL,—

“ I have just received your letter. Broken by grief, I can only express to you my admiration for that valiant army and its leaders. Overwhelmed by numbers, but faithful guardians of the glory and the honour of our unhappy country, they have kept intact the traditions of our old legions. You know my efforts and my powerlessness to avert a fate for which I would gladly have surrendered my dearest hopes.

“ I expect to see you to-morrow. I hope that you will take a letter to the Marshal, when you

rejoin your companions in arms, telling them how they have been the hope, the pride, and the grief of an exile like themselves.

"Croyez, mon cher Général, dans mes meilleurs sentiments."
EUGÉNIE.¹

The Empress realised that she could do no more. A further letter from the King of Prussia had shown that it was hopeless to try further to treat with him. She bent like a willow to the storm of inevitability, having made every effort and every offer that she could for the welfare of the French. She was yet to intercede with the Prussians at the investment of Paris: she was yet to urge on Bismarck the pregnant idea that his best policy was to leave French territory intact, and form an alliance with France to secure the peace of Europe.² But she knew already that her political power was gone.

What had it done for France—or for history? Far from being the sinister stupidity at which both Bonapartists, Royalists, and Republicans continued long to gird, it had put a strong, at times a violent pressure in the sense of both principles and common sense. Its heart was loyalty. She had swiftly grasped the Napoleonic principle of a strong Government accepted by the people and working for them, without too often consulting them. Combining this with a Catholic eagerness for the Church's traditional prestige, she had distrusted the rise of nationality in Prussia and Italy, more because these meant the jettison of honesty than because of their ultimate danger to France. The thrones of Spain and Naples were sacred to her. Friendship to England, alliance with Austria, she had sought and encouraged. At

¹ Filon: *Recollections*.

² MS. of Dom Elie Herment, O.S.B.

the one moment, when the tide of France's opportunity was at the full, she had been urgent for strong action. She had made but one fatal error of judgment, which involved disaster more personal than national. And yet, when all was weighed, the wit, the force, the courage of the *maitresse femme* had really achieved but transient enterprise at the cost of wide mistrust.

The cause of this has been made clear. . . . Not because her talent was rather for crinolines than affairs of state, but rather because she was a woman of fine gifts, because she was high-principled, brilliant, masterful—everything which marked her as a power thickened the wall of opposition from her lord's adherents. The last years of monarchy in Austria have since shown us an analogy to what then many observers failed to discern. Valuable and striking as were the gifts founded on her heroic character, Eugénie owed her position to the fact that she had fascinated as a woman. The frozen quicksilver of her affections could rise to mark the throb of fever in her blood whenever occasion played on her impulsive and sensitive vivacity. At this even those whom it fascinated looked askance. They knew that to be forceful, appealing, intuitive, and shrewd is not the same thing as being a thinker. From beginning to end hers was the woman's temper, the woman's domination, the woman's mind, the woman's place. With a husband of stronger character, in a Government of more stability, the phenomenal energy of her temper and wit—it amounted to the abnormality of genius—could hardly have been questioned.

But where all was stable, and where responsibility girt absolutism, she could hardly have risen to the throne. The conditions of her drama were governed

by the stars. Her passion was for gorgeous opportunity : what fortune had to offer her, daring never failed to take, nor to give what crisis required. For seven years she had fought with every weapon on which she could lay her hand for the stability of balance in Europe, and the honour of France against the Machiavellian genius who persuaded Prussia that patriotism was enough. Her final idea of a Franco-German alliance may serve Europe yet. But just as the hero is distinct from the statesman, her unflinching skill in affairs was not a thing that even those who most admired it would ever pick to hew the gnarled strength on which the world builds things to last. And yet when we think of Bismarck and Cavour, of Morny and Ollivier and Thiers, of the weak men in Austria, of the lack of foresight in England, she, the Empress of Napoleon III, the figure which flashed not only with emerald and light, but with honour and generosity and goodness, is more for the future than they : not because she anticipated the unfolding of time, as often her Emperor did, but because her heart was with the things which are supreme, whatever time unfolds.

3

While in the struggle against the hostile powers behind events, courage fought with the devices of a fevered brain against despair, the woman's heart was full of sympathy with her husband and her son. Where there is a man whom it is her office to console, few women collapse in adversity, and certainly not this woman. Fidelity was the ferro-concrete of her character, and between wife and husband—especially when they have shared a great destiny and a great disaster, and have in a son the pledge of a great hope

—there is a bond which nothing violates, not even long adulteries. The illumined and sheltered rock, which the Empress discovered among the waves which stormed over her wreck, was her marriage vow : the vow of man and woman to hold together for richer, for poorer ; for better, for worse. “ You and Louis,” she was to write on the anniversary of their wedding, “ are everything to me ; you hold the place of my whole family and country. The misfortunes of France touch me to the depths, but I have not an instant of regret for the brilliant side of our past life. Just to be together again, that is the whole of my wish. *Pauvre cher ami*, would that my devotion could make you forget for a moment the ordeals through which you have passed in greatness of soul.” ¹

“ For the rest ”—she had written before the fall of Metz—“ the more the world lightens around us, the more closely we shall be attached, and hand in hand we shall await the judgments of God.

“ Of the grandeurs of the past, there remains nothing of what drew us apart. We are united, united a hundred times more, because our sufferings and our hopes are melted into one on the dear young head of Louis. The darker the future is, the more one feels the need to lean on one another.” ²

Once she knew that Metz had fallen, the need of the wife’s heart, the need of reconciliation with her husband, was the guide of her enterprise. She determined to elude Bismarck and to rush to the Emperor. As long as the fortress had held out she preferred not to compromise her independent action. She had therefore made no expedition to Wilhelmshöhe where, since his surrender, Napoleon had been living a dignified and not disagreeable imprisonment in

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1930.

² *Ibid.*

one of the King's castles. On her expedition Count Clary alone was with her. On arriving at Cassel he went first to announce her arrival. Napoleon was astonished. The suite swiftly exchanged with one another the news and, attended by them, Napoleon went down to the steps to meet her. Dressed in deep mourning, she descended from her carriage, tired, pale, feverish, almost quivering, while the attendants crowded in obeisance round her and even kissed the flounces of her black robe. The Emperor's tone was so cold and conventional that she was inwardly much disturbed. But she betrayed no sign. Neither dared trust the slightest expression of their feelings till they were alone together. Then wife and husband again pressed heart to heart in a fervour which forced tears.¹

They were not left long alone. After the fall of Metz Napoleon had asked that his captive marshals might be imprisoned near him. General de Monts, the German Commander at Cassel, approached to announce that the answer was favourable. The Empress had retired. When she came back, the General was struck by the tiredness of her looks (which paled her beauty while it added to her distinction), and by the force of her manner, which convinced him that not only then, but at all times, she had imposed her own political views on Napoleon. She spoke for the most part to the Emperor directly, not to the General, and throughout her statements were in a tone of such decision that the German was convinced that not only did she insist upon attention but that hers was habitually the final word. She spoke to Napoleon, not deferentially, nor even as equal to equal, but in the tone of a guardian to a

¹ Paul Guériot : *La Captivité de Napoleon III.* F. Giraudeau : *Napoleon III Intime.*

minor.¹ The Empress remained at Wilhelmshöhe for five days, meeting the Duchess of Hamilton before she left. At her departure she descended from the carriage before she reached the station in order to pass more easily unobserved.

"My health is better," she wrote just before Christmas; "my strength seems to come back a little; but what masters all is my impatience to see you again. These long days of exile are so sad for me. God, I am sure, will give us happier times, but when? I cannot guess. My tenderness and love for you only grow. I would at the price of many sacrifices make life sweeter for you than circumstances have made it up to now."²

She had forgiven him with the generous exaltation of a temperament which was always impulsive and was now quite overwrought. For, after all, to compare Napoleon III to the Christ was going too far.

4

On March 21, 1871, the Emperor rejoined her at Chislehurst after his captivity. From that time they lived in the closest amity. The easy largeness of his mind, his fortitude in adversity and with the racking torment of the stone, his power of sympathy and forgiveness do to a certain extent redeem the weaknesses of character which accompanied his shrewd reflectiveness and the strong decision which marked him in the days of health. But the tense mind of Eugénie adjusted itself less easily. She had lived on the brilliance of her position and the solid growth of her power. To find these utterly gone would have

¹ General Comte de Monts: *Captivité de Napoleon III en Allemagne.*

² *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1930.

exhausted her in any case, and she faced her final position after long weeks of excited effort and strained responsibility with anguish attacking heroism in the intervals of insomnia and drugged sleep. Her *crise de dépression* took the form of great irritability, the fatigue shown in her powerlessness to rid herself of the irritant habit of thought. The financial responsibilities were largely hers. The Emperor had some sixty thousand pounds. The Empress, apart from her Spanish properties, had her jewels, and these were sold gradually till they brought in over £150,000—the chief purchaser being Rothschild.¹ Added to other anxieties, she had with her in the young Prince at once the centre of her disappointment as a mother and a boy who had given up the country and the hopes which from his babyhood had been his *raison d'être*. A child with a strong personality plays full and plangent chords on the hearts and nerves of those who love him. Besides that, the long grey English winter with the recurring quiet days of cloud weighed on their nerves as the omen of a doom which, like a term of imprisonment, would break them by the length of its strain.

All worked the Empress up to that state at once of overexcitement and depression where one subject tyrannises over thought and convulses it into expression. On whatever subject she commenced, it soon led back to Trochu and his treachery, which she would denounce interminably and fiercely. Then would succeed the spell of reaction when she would sit for hours in an arm-chair reading and refuse to take exercise. They invented a thousand excuses to get her to go out, often in vain. On the long rainy days she would work her embroidery.

But every afternoon at tea, every evening after

¹ Unpublished documents in Palacio de Liria.

dinner, there would be the same tirade against treason. Near midnight she once asked Mlle de Larminat the time. "Madame," answered the exasperated Maid-of-Honour, "It is three-quarters past Trochu." "Yes," answered the Empress; "I think only of that, but how can I forget it?" The Emperor, too, in his gentle voice would remonstrate: "Eugénie, you don't have ideas. Ideas take possession of you."¹

5

Nervous exhaustion needs to be sharply distinguished from a loss of faith. The heart of Eugénie was bleeding, for she had loved her palaces and her throne, and she loved them for her son. Sorrowful, anxious, depressed as she was, however, she realised that she was thinking more of religion and eternity. "God, in placing us here on earth," she wrote on August 6, 1871, to Mlle de Larminat who was taking a holiday in France, "has not limited the sufferings; He has kept the joys for Himself, and wisely: for it is only the first which bring us near Him. It is to Him, my child, that one must look. He is indeed the consoler, and the only support in these hours so cruel that one would despair of all if one did not believe in Him. Then let us have courage, and pray for those who pray so little. In the end, perhaps, He will take pity on us."²

Though the Empress was obsessed by the treachery of Trochu, she never indulged in petty vituperation of Bismarck. She knew well enough that in that age no one expected patriotism to be particularly squeamish. Between the unscrupulousness of nineteenth-century patriotism, however, and disloyalty to

¹ Comtesse des Garets: *L'Impératrice en Exil*.

² *Ibid.*

those to whom in one's own country one has sworn allegiance she drew a sharp distinction. "The dictates of egoism can sometimes coincide with those of duty," she observed, "but one can never compromise with honour."¹

In September she went back to Spain to see her blind mother, who still had Miss Flowers with her, and lived again her old life at Liria and Carabanchel. In the following summer she took the Prince to tour in Scotland, and paid a visit to Hamilton. So, as twelve years before, distraction worked the cure of overwrought tension.

6

During the winter of 1872, it was seen that the Emperor's condition was becoming very grave. His doctors consulted Sir James Paget and Sir William Gull, and they operated on January 2, 1873. There were no bad symptoms, and the patient passed a quiet night. Eugénie felt her courage rise. But, as she said, she was still far from feeling that all was for the best in the best of possible worlds : she felt that anxiety had become the normal state of her existence.² The English papers published every bulletin; the French ones seemed to treat the matter lightly, and the solicitous heart of Eugénie was deeply wounded. She knew that the first operation had been grave, and that a second was to follow. This, which took place on January 6, was again called successful, but the patient grew weaker and at times delirious. On the 8th the Empress knew that things had gone very far, and expected the worst. "One cannot tell you what he has suffered," she wrote to Madame Cornu. "He has undergone, I think, the greater part of the

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

² Comtesse des Garets, *op. cit.*

miseries of body and mind which it is given to man to endure. Will not a cry of justice at last arise in this France which he has loved so much and which he loves enough still to silence these frightful calumnies which have caused him so much pain ? ” ¹ At ten next morning his pulse began to fail, and the Prince was summoned from Woolwich. He was with them in a little more than an hour, but even that was too late. The Empress greeted him with the words : “ Louis, I have only you left.” ²

The trying ceremonies of the lying-in-state followed for a week, while respectful crowds of French and English pressed into the house. On January 14, at midnight, the Empress, accompanied by the Duchesse de Mouchy and four of her ladies, came down to the closed coffin and spent the remainder of the night in prayer. The next day followed the long pomp of the funeral. At two in the afternoon of the day after, the Empress, leaning on the Prince’s arm, came down to greet the crowd of sympathetic mourners. As she entered, they threw themselves on their knees, and approached, many in tears, to kiss her hand.³ She had begun a part of new dignity, the part which was to be hers for nearly fifty years ; the feverish, dazzling, imperious, brilliant, able sovereign was to be forgotten : Eugénie was to move in a new sympathy and new affection as a heart of love and mourning.

¹ “Lettres Intimes.” *Le Correspondant*, Aug. 25, 1922.

² Filon : *Le Prince Impérial*.

³ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress*.

XII

THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

*Je demeurais longtemps errant dans Césarée,
Lieux charmants où mon cœur vous avait adorée.
Je vous rédemandais de vos tristes Etats.
Je cherchais en pleurant les traces de vos pas.*

RACINE : *Bérénice.*

I

FROM January 9, 1873, to March 17, 1874, when the Prince would attain his eighteenth birthday, Eugénie, by natural right and by her husband's will, was in the position of a Regent. It needed a gymnast's suppleness, for she saw on the one side that the Prince's position would be stronger if it were seen that she was not dominating it, and at the same time she must assert her rights against unscrupulous enemies. She was still living in that world apart to which, for consolation and for spiritual adjustment, we are led in the intimacy of the heart with death's transitions, when the strident bumptiousness of Napoléon Jérôme called her abruptly to the battlefield of affairs. He refused to accept the Emperor's will as his final one, which, he hinted, Eugénie had suppressed. She had done what she could to appease him. "Come now," she had said to him direct, "you know I am not a vindictive. Let us forget our quarrels. Put your hand in mine, and let us make no mention of the past."

"Madame," his answer had been, "I shall shortly

make you acquainted with my resolutions." His resolutions were first that he should have his own direction of the party, and that this direction should be absolute. This the Empress would actually have gone so far as to accept. But the second roused both her pride and her prudence to combative fury.

"The second," she cried afterwards to Raoul Duval. "Would you believe it? He dared demand that the person of the Prince Imperial should be confided to his sole care and surveillance. Do you realise the insult, and all the significance of threat in such a message?" Shaken with sobs, she held out her hands to Raoul Duval as she said this. Her gesture told of such a wound that, in his sympathy, he forgot all etiquette and clasped both her hands in his.

"Does the Prince," she asked then, "wish me to admit myself unable and unworthy to bring up my son? What have I done to deserve such outrage?" Her son then and long before was aware of his cousin's moves and was furious. His loyalty and respect for his mother could not have been shaken by any one, let alone by a man whom from childhood he had detested and despised. So strong was his feeling that, when he came of age and made his will, he decided, against his mother's advice, to exclude Napoléon Jérôme from the succession. But the truth was that all the hopes of a restoration were centred on himself.¹

2

After his father's funeral he returned to Woolwich, and remained there until the summer of 1874. Devoted to soldiering from a child, he would not let

¹ Filon : *Recollections*.

politics interfere with the course of Woolwich discipline. "For God's sake, let me work!"¹ was his one cry; it seemed hardly adequate to those who made a pilgrimage from France to beg him to come back. But if he made some French enthusiasts impatient, he was winning a fine reputation in England. He had both his mother's courage and her charm, and a depth of character which struck every one. Besides that he was becoming a really efficient cadet, and in a preliminary examination in artillery in January 1874, at Woolwich, came out first. It was a radiant day for the Empress when she heard this. Her strong character had moulded him into a son after her own heart. Principles and mischievous gaiety, duty and charm, religion and carelessness of danger, ambition and efficiency (though behind them was the dictatorial temper of one privileged from babyhood and come in early youth to power), made the high-spirited boy the model of a Catholic Prince.² He was, wrote Sir Lintorn Simmons, the Governor of the R.M.A. at Woolwich, "one of the most amiable, intelligent, honourable, courageous, and right-thinking youths I have ever had to deal with."³

Now the Empress was freed from what had haunted her during the last six years of Napoleon's reign, the anxiety lest incompetence and unworthiness should disintegrate the Crown. She was, in fact, relieved from all her pressing anxieties, though at times, even in her pride in her son, the monotony of the exiled life depressed her spirits. "What shall I tell you of Camden?" she wrote to Mlle de Larminat in January 1874. "The same number of cows in the field,

¹ Comtesse des Garets : *L'Impératrice Eugénie en Exil*.

² Filon : *Le Prince Impérial : Souvenirs et Documents*.

³ *Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1892.

Conneau always saying his prayers, Corvisart at work with the farm, Clary at his accounts. Dear Adèle passes her time in *keeping her temper*; our dear Duke cuts himself in two to be here, and with his little girl; and I, dear Marie, I embroider, I write, I curse, I bless, according to the weather, and I even try to persuade myself that I am greedy so as to find a pleasure."

If it were a sad bore for her, what was it for a Maid of Honour? "I have eaten my white bread first," she wrote a little later to Marie de Larminat. "My share is finished: it is the turn of others now; but you who bury your youth, it is you I pity. Do not grudge it me if I am too selfish not to accept your sacrifice. Those who fall from a first floor don't often hurt themselves when they fall. But I have fallen from such a height that all that is within me is broken, and I hardly notice more if my life is monotonous. For the moment there are no worries, even on the horizon. I work for long hours without thinking of anything else than colours and shadows. It is a respite that reading no longer gives me."

Very often a word written against the Emperor, a sign of ingratitude, would goad Eugénie's sensitiveness to fresh outbursts. When Guizot's daughter died—though respect for mourning restrained her—she could not forget what he had said against her son. Her towering soul was volcanic, and hid beneath its snows a flood of boiling lava, which would have made many an earthquake but for the eruption of tumult or passion which released the matter of convulsion. Phenomenal in endurance, she also suffered more than any; and those who understood her knew that her heart's bitterness asked for all their sympathy. Her nature did not lose the sweetness which became the grace of her adversity. But when

loyalty was in question, she saw no reason why patience should take the edge from her indignation. At the same time, she kept a clear view of the need of patience, both personally and politically. "God grant," she wrote to the Prince's old tutor, Lavisse, "that they will be wise enough in France not to feel the insults they cannot avenge. There is greatness also in being master of oneself."¹

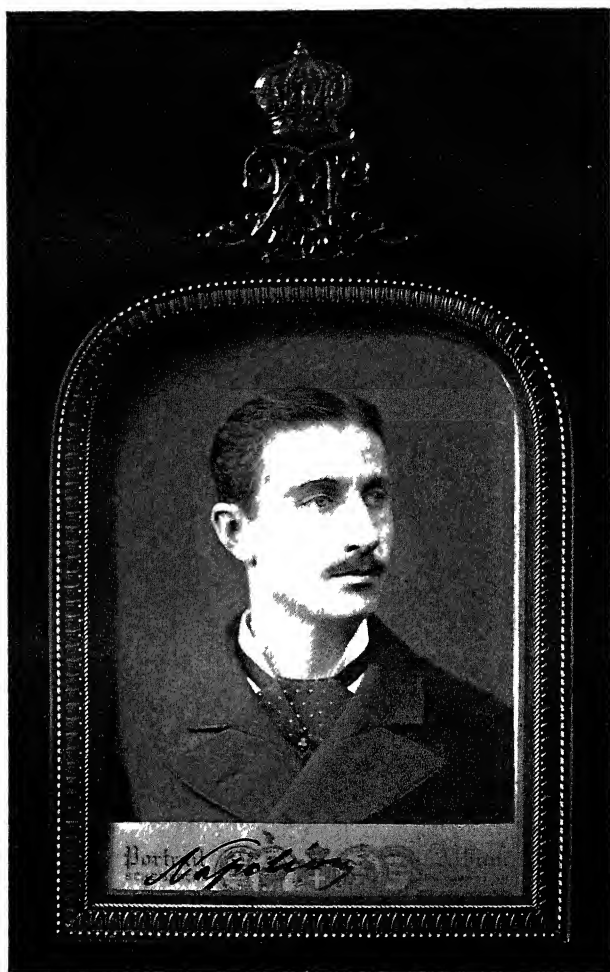
3

When the Prince came of age there was a fête at Camden. To the faithful group of his adherents, he made the speech prepared for him, a speech which was firm and energetic, but not so much so as to compromise his position as a cadet at Woolwich. His tone had been natural and emphatic, and had encouraged his mother to think there was more life in the party than there was. "My heart at present is so little attuned to joy that I think only of unhappy things," she had written, for the weather weighed continually on her spirits. In the summer she went back to Arenenberg, while the Prince with some of his friends made a tour in the Bernese Oberland. Two melancholy winters followed. The return of Don Alfonso to power in Spain on New Year's Day, 1875, awakened her hopes. When the one bird had escaped from his cage, she asked, might not another? The Prince had left Woolwich, and each year commanded more attraction and won a higher esteem in England. His gaiety and exuberance passed like sunlight into the grey days at Camden. He was an example of that mysterious nervous power which makes itself felt apart from any direct appeal to the senses, and which gives the word personality its

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 1, 1929.

richest meaning. He was small ; and one could hardly say that he was handsome : his too strongly marked features, and a certain something between hardness and sadness which often came into his expression, leave in a portrait no index to the royal magnetism which strongly moved those who were brought near him. His mood had the intensity of his mother's, so as to communicate itself to those around him : for some natures—such as both hers and his—are so electrical that their life exceeds themselves and makes itself felt as a strong force on others, either to attract or to repel. Even though they are not indiscriminately affectionate, their thoughts and feelings, even when unconscious, are nerved tendrils which stretch and embrace in a great swiftness what is presented to their perception. Such is, in general, the action of this phenomenal gift of personal power : making for unity, its instinct is an irradiating charm, like the coloured lightning of an arctic night. But if an alien and unassimilable power meets it, its strength, again like that of electricity, destroys what it would have assimilated : and the very sensitiveness of love provokes a strong and immediate reaction to antipathy. The embrace, resisted, becomes an attack. The height of nobleness is found where goodwill, overcoming nature, meets this antipathy with largeness ; and on this high scale was set Eugénie's spiritual drama, as also that of her son.

When mother and son are both powers, there is another type of moral combat : for the mother's natural dominance must, even in Nature's plan, give way to the force of rising manhood. The Empress, at her son's coming of age, was aware of the crisis. She had been prepared for it and met it. But the adjustment meant a constant effort—effort showing



*[From an unpublished photograph in the
possession of the Duke of Alba]*

THE PRINCE IMPERIAL

itself at times in tension, if not in friction. In political affairs her shrewdness made her graceful. She changed her rôle at once in 1874 from that of the Regent who commands to that of the elder who advises. "Do not speak much," she would say, for example, to the Prince apropos of meeting a new follower. "Let him speak, and you listen. That is what your father would have done."¹ She saw what strength Napoleon had found in few words. Voluntarily and daily, she effaced herself more and more. When the Prince left Woolwich, she left even the details of control to him, and carried discretion so far as to be absent when his little councils met and took important decisions. In talk and letters she gave her opinion frankly, but she did not force it. And her retirement was neither sulky nor insincere : it was the retirement of a tactful and large-minded woman of affairs.

Forgiveness could not efface from her acute mind the weaknesses of her husband. Though she had loved and had encouraged gaiety and amusement, she had trained the Prince to a strict Catholicism which left no room for looseness of conduct. She watched carefully lest he should be spoilt by his position of privilege, and made it clear from the beginning that for a prince, above all, is necessary a life of discipline. Besides this, she knew that he must be extremely careful not to dissipate his resources. His father had been quite carelessly open-handed : the son had liked also to appear princely. But here the Empress was in absolute control : the whole of the family fortune was hers.

When people have been very poor in early youth, as Eugénie had been, they retain generally a clear sense of the value of money. She was never inclined

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress.*

to prodigality : she had a natural taste for carefulness. Besides this, the example of the Emperor had been a lesson to her : he had been too often robbed, and had wasted his resources on many a sentimental or too grateful impulse ; and lastly, she knew how much a return to power would cost her son. A crisis might arise at any moment for which ample money would be an absolute need ; and in any case the elections and the newspapers of a political party cannot be run for nothing. For all these reasons she kept the young Prince on a small income, an income which would have made his position in London society rather difficult, if he had had the taste for fashion. But his tastes were for something both graver and more active. Full of the sense of what was possible for him, his eyes ranged the world for opportunities. His mother watched the projects of his daring with pride, with solicitude, and sometimes with a terrible presentiment.

4

When he was twenty, however, she allowed herself a break in the monotonous economy of Camden. She went to Arenenberg for the summer, and for the winter took the Villa Oppenheim in Florence. Travel, activity, distraction, brightness were a physical necessity to her highly strung nature, at once so sensitive and so energetic, where the heart was saved from eating itself away only by a strong interest in events and circumstances ; and these became the more vital to her after the Prince's coming of age took from her the immediacy of politics. A waiting game was never hers. Her spirit was clear and liked a prospect of clearness on which to base an energetic plan to attain a definite end. The life of the exiled

sovereign had become as obscure as the English sky seems to a child of the Mediterranean : a grey pearl which the Empress likened in her vivid way to cooking without salt. She welcomed any sort of distraction, even if it were the call of one of her most bourgeois neighbours accompanied by a schoolboy.

On October 20, 1876, she arrived with the Prince Imperial at the Villa Oppenheim and was received enthusiastically. Happy months of sight-seeing, of unrestraint, of social meetings followed. When she met Victor Emmanuel, she showed that her spirit was unbroken. He visited her in her villa, and she returned his call at the Pitti Palace. She was received in a salon hung with portraits of German princes. While the Empress talked her eyes were scrutinising the portraits so steadily that it could not but be obvious that Victor Emmanuel had hung no portrait of the sovereign to whom in the first place he owed his position in Italian history. The King became very awkward.

"You are astonished at what you see?" he exclaimed.

"No," answered the Empress in her most trenchant tone ; "I am astonished at what I do not see."

Later she took the Prince to pay his homage to his godfather in the Vatican. At the same time she herself called at the Quirinal on Humbert and Margherita. She was later to learn that by this act she was to be banned for ever from the presence of the Holy Father. Two years later, both the robber King and the despoiled Pope had passed away.

From Naples she crossed to Gibraltar and made another tour in Spain, revisiting once again the now blind Countess of Montijo. Eugénie's swiftness of decision, her love of adventure, her sense of humour showed that now, in her fiftieth year, she had kept

through all her disasters the adventurousness of youth. If it were the invasion of her rest by Andalusian insects, if it were a midnight battle for admission to the inn at Ronda after long bruising hours in a diligence, if it were the view of a British officer on deck with a Bible in one hand and a brandy bottle in the other to help him through an English Sunday, it all suited the mood of the sportswoman *en voyage*. She returned to Camden marvellously better.¹ And even Camden, with the Prince at hand, had its many consolations. Respect and consideration, such as she had seldom known in her heyday, laid velvet before the widowed sovereign's feet. "I do not know why they all complained of Camden Place," she said when she had left it. "To me it was like heaven."²

5

With each year that passed the Prince Imperial was looking more eagerly for an event to show his mettle. His motives were many. He wanted to redeem Sedan; he wanted to efface the memory of the tears which as a child he had shed when he knew the war was lost; he wanted to show himself a leader; he wanted to arouse the enthusiasm of the French; and, not least, since there had been much eager talk between the Empress and the Queen as to whether, in spite of the religious difficulty, he might not marry Princess Beatrice, he wanted to make also a great impression in England. Furthermore, the unconscious struggle for domination between an independent mother and her son had maintained a personal tension beneath his deference and her solicitude. There was a knife edge to her passionate affection for him, and it tried the nerves

¹ Comtesse des Garets.

² Filon: *Recollections*.

of both. Besides all these, he thirsted like a young officer for the adventure of war.

Where could he find it? One of his ideas had been to join the Austrian army when, in virtue of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, she was to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. But "If there is no war," his mother said, "you will waste your time in an Austrian garrison playing billiards and making love to an Italian singer. If there is war, with these upheavals in the Balkans, you may well find yourself fighting against Turkey who is France's ally, or against Russia, when the Czar greeted you at Woolwich like a father."¹

Early in 1879 he saw a chance that seemed to suit him excellently. To fight with England in a country where there was every chance of adventure and none of diplomatic awkwardness seemed a perfect plan. His greatest friends at Woolwich—Bigge,² Slade, and Woodhouse—were sailing. When he first mentioned it the Empress tried in every way to dissuade him, and she even thought of writing to the Queen to prevent it. But she soon saw that he was bent upon it. "I have no object in life," he said. "I am not a man of pleasure. I care for nothing of that kind. I don't go out into society. I refuse all their invitations. I can do nothing in my own country. What can I do?" She consented to allow him to apply. Later she saw despair bringing tears into his eyes—tears which nothing else had brought there for many a year. "What is the matter?" she asked. "I have been refused." At first she had been delighted. But his despair had been so overwhelming, she went at last herself to press his claim at the War Office.

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

² Now Lord Stamfordham, who owes to the Empress his position at the Court.

"I have had all the trouble in the world to obtain from the English Government the permission for which I was applying" (he wrote on February 24 to his old A.D.C.). "To-day, at last, I have it; but this permission is full of reserves. I am deemed to go to the Cape as a traveller, and it is only there that I am to don my uniform and to attach myself to the general in command of the artillery. So one must be careful to recommend our journalists not to say that I start with my battery, but indeed that I am rushing down there to join in the efforts and dangers of my comrades. They have refused to specify the position which I hold in the English army, for there is nothing official. I must ask you to tell the Duke, and all our friends, the reasons which inspire me so that they shan't think that I am foolhardy." ¹

Every one had been touched by his insistence, but none knew how he had obtained permission. The Queen, who had overborne the arguments of Lord Beaconsfield and the Cabinet against his going, ² sent him on March 1 a special train to take him to Southampton. He brought letters of recommendation both to Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor at Cape Town, and to Lord Chelmsford, the General Commanding in Zululand. At Durban, he was received in his subaltern's uniform like a reigning sovereign.

¹ Unpublished letter from the Prince Imperial to the Marquis d'Espeuilles, formerly his A.D.C., Feb. 24, 1879. The Prince wrote next day to Prince Charles Bonaparte: "*J'espère que vous ferez comprendre à ceux qui considèrent mon départ comme un coup de tête que je n'ai pas prise une semblable détermination qu'après y avoir mûrement réfléchi.*"

A silver flask and sandwich box show that the Prince's accoutrements were fine.

² *The Times*, Oct. 4, 1930. Cf. Lord Newton: *Life of Lord Lyons*.

When the Empress heard that he had had a light attack of fever in Natal she was terribly disquieted, especially as the criticisms of the Bonapartists on his action were made plainer to her each day. The Prince, however, attached himself to Lord Chelmsford's staff, and in the glorious winter weather looked everywhere for adventure. The Commander-in-Chief, indeed, had written, "My only fear is that he will be too bold."¹

At the end of May he had been attached to Lord Chelmsford's Quartermaster-General, Colonel Harrison, a sapper, and was allowed with Captain Carey to construct at Conference Hill fortifications which would defend the English base on its march towards Ulundi. At eight on the morning of June 1 he rode out with Carey and some troopers on a reconnaissance. Their aim was to choose a camp for Sir Evelyn Wood's flying column on Blood River which crossed their path to Ulundi.

Riding out with the escort he commanded Carey crossed a plateau and descended into the kraal of Itelezi. There, hidden by maize and long grass, he halted and gave orders for the saddle-girths to be loosed, while he discussed Napoleon I's campaigns of 1796 and 1800 with the Prince. Towards four in the afternoon, while they were still halting, a party of Zulus burst on them through the grass with rifles and assegais. All rushed to their horses. The Prince was delayed. As he tried to mount the holster of his saddle gave way. All had ridden off regardless of him, and he was alone. He turned with revolver and assegai to meet the horde of Zulus and fought like a lion. Only when, tripping in a hole, he sank down to a sitting position did they dare to close with him. Among the Zulu maize and grass of the

¹ Filon : *Le Prince Impérial. Souvenirs et Documents*,

little donga leading to Blood River, witnessed by none but savages, the heir of the Bonapartes fought and fell for England where Englishmen had deserted him.

Carey, who had quite lost his head, had galloped back. Meeting some officers on his ride he said nothing of the Prince, and, still in a panic, he even entered the Mess without reporting that the Prince was missing. In the evening he wrote to his wife a letter of terror and anguish, saying that at the moment of attack there had been nothing for him to do but flee. Meanwhile the body of the dead Prince, pierced with wounds, lay under the stars, stripped of all but the chain of sacred medals which he wore around his neck. ¹

6

The Empress had long been haunted by presentiments of evil. Reading that there were many poisonous snakes in Natal, she had imagined them in his boots or under his pillow. On his birthday she had realised that for the first time he had spent it away from her. "I do not murmur against destiny," she had written, "for I would rather suffer anxiety on his account than see him languish and decline. Exile weighs heavily on him, and I cannot blame him for having obeyed the law of his blood, and searched afar, amidst dangers, to make his name echo through the country. If God lends him life, and gives him the opportunities to distinguish himself, the days so dark and so sad which we are now passing will be the most brilliant in my life. Nevertheless,

¹ From unpublished MS. report of Sir Evelyn Wood presented to Queen Victoria on her return from South Africa with the Empress in 1880. The Queen, at the request of the Empress, ordered that anything detrimental to Carey should be treated as confidential.

before this lack of news my courage fails. We are no longer prepared for it. Impatience and the fever to know make me anxious." ¹

The news did not reach England quickly. It was brought first by ship to Teneriffe and then cabled on. It reached the Queen at Balmoral on June 19. "No, no, it cannot be!" she kept on saying, sitting up till dawn, and even then unable to sleep. The memory of Lord Beaconsfield's advice—so obstinately disregarded—was not a comforting thing.

And how was the Empress to be told? The Queen commanded Lord Sydney at Froggall to take a message over to Camden where he had always been on terms of friendship. In age, in rank, in experience, the first of her suite was the Duc de Bassano. He came into the presence of the Empress.

"I have bad news," he said.

"He is wounded?"

"No."

Eyes told her what lips could not utter. It was she herself who said the words "He is dead." Then she fainted, and remained for days afterwards alone, silent, inert, in a darkened room, piercing with the arrow of utter blankness of heart the mysteries of death and fate. Nothing roused or moved her till she knew, three days later, that the Queen was hurrying to her from Balmoral. Then her sense of obligation enabled her to conquer her exhaustion. Forced once again to face the world, she showed more than ever before the intrinsic grandeur of her spirit.² "Her conduct," wrote the Queen to Lord Beaconsfield, "was beyond all praise. Her resignation, her un-

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 1, 1929.

² M. Filon's story that she fainted is denied by *The Times* and by Agnes Carey (*Empress Eugénie in Exile*), but it is true (*Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, iii. p. 28).

murmuring, patient submission to God's will, her conviction that it could not be otherwise, and the total absence of all blame of others are admirable. But her heart is broken." Whatever the state of her soul, the strain could not but tell on mind and body. There had been at first after the faint a sort of nervous convulsion, and then a weakness in the throat had made her unable to swallow solid food. "She can eat nothing and hardly sleep," wrote the Queen. Hardly any one dared enter her room. But gradually she was made acquainted with all there was to know. She read every newspaper: read in the French ones the execration of the name of England and of the Queen, who was accused of treacherously manœuvring an ambush for the Prince; read in the English ones of the great tide of sympathy and admiration which poured towards Camden. Every word about the Prince which reached her showed him more eminent on the heights of courage and goodness. Officers wrote home to say how much he had been loved; how he spared no trouble; how he had a pleasant word and a smile for everybody; how he was full of spirit and wholly devoid of self-conceit; how he was as charming and cheery a companion as one could wish to meet, and how, in a word, that he was easily the most popular officer attached to the forces in South Africa.¹

On June 29 some last relics were brought to her. Among them was the *Imitation of Christ*, which she had sent him during the campaign of 1870, and a Prayer Book with words in his own writing which gave an inner picture of his spirit in all its unselfishness, its courage, and its faith.

"My Lord God, I give you my heart; but you

¹ *The Times*, June 28, 1879.

give me faith. Without faith there is no ardent prayer, and prayer is a need of my soul. I pray you not to remove the obstacles which rise in my path, but that you will allow me to overcome them. I pray you not to disarm my enemies, but to give me aid to conquer my own heart. Keep for my love those who are dear to me and grant them happy days. If you will to spread on earth but a certain number of joys, take, O God, those which fall to my lot, and divide them amongst the most worthy; and may the most worthy be my friends. If you wish to visit wrath upon men, strike me. Misfortune is changed into joy by the sweet thought that those whom one loves are happy. Happiness is poisoned by the bitter thought that I am rejoicing while those a thousand times dearer to me than myself are suffering. For me, O God, I flee further happiness. Take it from my path. Joy I cannot find but in forgetfulness of the past. If I forget those who exist no longer, I shall in my turn be forgotten. What a sad thought that makes one say Time effaces all! The only satisfaction I seek is that which endures always, that which comes from a quiet conscience. O my Lord God, show me always where my duty is, and give me the power to accomplish it on every occasion. When I reach the end of life, I shall turn my gaze fearlessly upon the past. The memory of it will not be a long remorse, and so I shall be happy. Deepen in my heart, O Lord God, the conviction that those whom I love and who are dead are the witnesses of all my actions. My life will be worthy of their view, and my most secret thoughts will never make me blush.”¹

¹ Filon : *Le Prince Impérial*.

What mother before such a picture of the character of her son could not but be consoled? Her one thought was to reach him through the grave and gate of death, and without him, she would say, there could be no heaven.

Her one wish was that his soldierliness should be recognised for what it was : and the thought of this duly upheld her from day to day. There was no repining, no rebellion. While every message supported her confidence and her pride in her son, the sympathy of the Queen, shown in three successive visits, was but one among many visits from England's great. Messages came also from the German Emperor, the Emperor of Austria, the Czar of Russia, the Queen of Wurtemberg, the King of Italy, the King of Sweden, the King of Denmark, the King of Spain, and Queen Isabella. The Queen wished to put in Westminster Abbey the statue of the Prince which was finally placed in St. George's Chapel at Windsor, and the Prince of Wales insisted that a warship should conduct his body from Plymouth to Woolwich Arsenal. It was on July 11 that the coffin was finally borne to Camden. When they told the Empress of its arrival, she came down the stairs in, as it were, one bound, and threw herself upon the bier in a fierce embrace ; then, with her forehead like a statue resting upon it, she remained tearless, silent, inert, the whole night long. No one dared approach her. As dawn paled the lamps and candles, the Duchesse de Mouchy raised the dark figure and lifted the veils of mourning. Once more the Empress enfolded the coffin of her son and kissed it, and then she was carried in a torpor, which was itself like the sleep of death, and so lay till all was over.¹

¹ Comtesse des Garets : *L'Impératrice Eugénie en Exil*.

The Queen and Princess Beatrice on their arrival were greeted by Lord Sydney and the Bonaparte Princes. They then passed into the *chapelle ardente*, which was hung with white. On a catafalque covered with a violet velvet pall, embroidered with golden bees, was placed the coffin, on which rested the Cross of the Legion of Honour and a mount of flowers. High around it great candles blazed. After a few minutes the procession, headed by two hundred cadets from Woolwich and closed by the mitred Bishop of Constantine, started from the house. The Queen's four sons, with the Duke of Cambridge, the Crown Prince of Sweden, the Duc de Bassano, and Rouher held the pall. Beautiful and solemn, now to the music of Handel, now to that of Beethoven, the procession with its cadets, its princes, its priests, and its thousands of mourners, had moved from Camden to the Catholic Church at Chislehurst. The Empress, lying in her darkened room, saw nothing. She heard only the funeral marches, the muffled drums. At every minute the guns' funeral salute boomed into the room like a sledge-hammer falling upon her heart. The Duchesse de Mouchy had been with her, and finally came out to the Queen to tell that the Empress had prepared to receive her. The Queen with the Princess went into a room so dark that she could see nothing. The Empress approached sobbing; the Queen, with her eyes full of tears, put her arms round her and said, "No one feels for you as I do." The Empress kissed her, and kissed the Princess and said gently, "*Je vous remercie, Madame, pour toutes vos bontés.*" (60) And then she was again left alone.

Five days later the Queen was with her once more, to ask her to come and stay at Osborne. Victoria found Eugénie calm, "though crying a good deal at

times." The Empress thanked the Queen again and again for all her sympathy, talked of the circumstances of the Prince's departure, of Prince Lucien's visit to the Queen, and then suddenly said with the greatest fervour :

"N'est-ce pas, on ne fera rien contre ce pauvre homme? Ah, non, je vous prie! Il peut avoir une mère." (61)

She was thinking of Carey. The Queen hesitated. It was, after all, not in her hands. But she said she would see what could be done, to which the Empress answered, *"Merci, merci."*

The Queen told her of Carey's misery, and the grief they themselves all felt. But the Empress cut her short with the words :

"Je ne veux rien savoir. Je sais qu'on l'a tué, voilà tout." (62)

The Empress, however, with her suite, were not content to let Carey's disgrace fall as a reproof on the Prince's rashness, or perhaps even their own. Eugénie asked for his pardon, but she did not mean no pardon was required. Carey was responsible, there could be no doubt of it. The Prince simply was deserted. "It is incredible," wrote the Queen, "that there was not one who remained behind to try and save this precious life. I sent for Arthur, and gave him these reports to read, at which he was greatly shocked." Both felt that it was all "distracting and painful in the highest degree."¹

When the Queen knew that the Empress had heard from Lord William Beresford, and, through Carey's wife, exactly what had happened, she wrote at a great length :

"I have just seen Lord William Beresford"

¹ This letter was published by the Comtesse de Garets in *L'Impératrice Eugénie en Exil*.

(ran her letter of August 25 from Osborne),
“who had the honour of being admitted to see you, dear Sister, and he has told me of a letter ¹ of this *wretched* Captain Carey which his wife has sent you. Could I beg you to send it to me? Up to now I have kept silence on the details, so heartrending to you, of the terrible catastrophe of 1st June. But now that nothing is hidden from you, allow me to say *all* that *I have* suffered, and that *I am suffering*, in thinking of the conduct of this man who *dares* to speak as he has done. I, and the whole Army of England, are wounded, I might say *humiliated*, by the conduct of an officer whom very few in my Army, I believe *not one*, is like. But the truth will be known—and *ought* to be. There is only one feeling among all those who *know* the fact. I suffer for you, and I suffer terribly myself, in thinking that it is in my Army that this terrible misfortune happened.” ²

The Queen wrote again in equally strong terms on September 3, on seeing that Carey had written to the Duc de Bassano. On October 8 she wrote that in London there was a feeling of general indignation against Carey, and that his own regiment was furious with him. The Prince, in the words of Sir Lintorn Simmons, the Field-Marshal, had been killed in circumstances which made one blush for the honour of the British Army.³ The Empress, however, never wavered in her courage, her resignation, or her magnanimity.

As she wished, the authorities visited no judgment

¹ *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, vol. iii.

² Unpublished letter at the Palacio de Liria.

³ *Nineteenth Century*, Sept. 1892.

upon Carey, though he was found guilty by the Court Martial and sentenced to be cashiered.¹ The man who had failed the traditions of his Service was visited by a severer punishment. He went from regiment to regiment, transferring to the Indian Army. The treatment was everywhere the same. If he made a remark, it was ignored. If he came into a Mess, his presence was unnoticed ; if he approached a group of officers, it melted away. For some years Carey survived this tearing at his ulcerous wound, and then in Bombay he died. For a moment's default in an emergency, this agent of Fate paid his price.

7

In November the Empress had news that her mother was dying. She felt, therefore, that she must go to Madrid, and to go she must travel through France. This journey was to her, she said, a consolation. She heard not one word to wound ; she saw many eyes fill with tears as she passed by. "The women, above all, were touched," she wrote. "They felt something playing upon the chord of motherhood, which is common to almost all ; they had known me happy once, they saw me *alone* now. Crossing, almost like a foreigner, this France, so deeply loved by the son who had gone to meet his death to draw her attention to him, . . . and that to reach my dying mother. The fate which weighs upon me made this voyage useless, and has led to an interview which I found most painful." ²

¹ *The Times*, Aug. 29. Carey had had an excellent record, and was strongly recommended to mercy by Lord Chelmsford, not only on account of the difficult circumstances in which he was placed, but also because this was the sole occasion on which his courage was known to have failed.

² E. Lâvisse. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 1928.

With this memory added to her sorrow, the Empress hastened back through France, she thought for the last time. She had realised how much she had loved France, and she had known what exiles feel on being restored to their native soil. In England, in the winter, the grey dark weather froze her thought and her heart.¹

She had been feeling, meanwhile, that one thing was required of her. It was to pass the anniversary of the Prince's death where he had been killed. The thought of using every association of earth to lift the life of earth to the life beyond the grave where she should still be one with him she loved had been the first instinct of her soul. She was always one of those to whom the Church is more than the infinite Divinity, because her nature turned rather, as we saw, to a virtuous walk among created things than to the mystic apprehension of the Absolute. For her, therefore—as for most good Christians—the end of life was a spiritual companionship with those whom she had most loved. She had never loved, she never could love any one, as she had loved the Prince Imperial. She felt at first that she could not leave his tomb : so she had written, on July 18, to refuse the Queen's invitation to Osborne.

“MADAME,—

“Beginning my letter so, do not believe for a moment that my heart does not appreciate all the tenderness and sensitiveness that there is in yours ; but I am so unhappy in my affections that I am afraid to make use of any more intimate expression. Your Majesty is concerned for my health ! Alas ! How much life is still left to me ! Sorrow does not kill where one is most

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 1, 1929.

alive, that I do indeed feel. I am still so overwhelmed by the terrible situation in which God has placed me that I have no strength, even to imagine a plan, for I feel that my whole life is between the two tombs while I wait till God takes enough pity on me to open the third.

"I beg Your Majesty to leave me beside them. If indeed I have the courage later, I shall try, for to me, every word which comes from you is touching and moving. But it is all so fresh ; I have no strength yet to go out. I want to go and visit them first, but I have not been able yet.

"How the idea of being near Your Majesty appeals to my heart ! But indeed it seems to me that, when one is so stricken as I am, God seems to have crossed out one's name from the list of those that live. I do not know how to thank Your Majesty for the love you show me. I am deeply touched, above all, for the tears that I have seen flowing for my beloved son."

So now Eugénie felt that it was a pilgrimage which drew her "as the Holy Land draws the disciples of Christ." "The thought of seeing the stages of my dear son's last journey, of retracing his steps, of seeing with my own eyes the scene on which his dying eyes rested, of spending the anniversary of the night of the 1st of June in watching and prayer alone with the memory of him is the aim of my life and the need of my spirit." After the war had ended it had gained on her till it dominated all. She foresaw the strain of a hurried journey, of a long sea voyage, of much hardship in the wilds ; but all vanished at the thought of Itelezi. "The thought of being in this way closer to the Prince," she wrote,

"sustains me and gives me fresh courage. Without it, I should never have enough strength to endure my life, and I should be drowned in my sorrow."¹ And there are those who say she had no heart and never cared for him !

The Empress left England on March 28, 1880. Accompanied not only by Bigge and Slade, but Sir Evelyn and Lady Wood, and Napoleon de Bassano, she arrived at Capetown on April 16 after a short visit to St. Helena. Offered a quiet hospitality by Sir Bartle Frere, she wrote to Pietri : " I cannot tell you what I felt when I entered this house, the first halting-place of my beloved son." An incense of respectful sympathy rose in the path of the bereaved sovereign : everywhere her reception was most touching. Not a sound, not a shout, but the tribute of silence and uncovered heads. Every one who had known the Prince spoke of him in terms which at once appealed to her pride, and outlined more sharply her knowledge of her loss. One feeling, and one alone, met her everywhere. It was that which inspired the great cry, " O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

The journey from Pietermaritzburg to Itelezi occupied three weeks. The long days of driving terribly unnerved her. Every day, wrote Napoleon de Bassano, she grew sadder.² She suffered from fever, from torrid sun, and one night their tents were almost swept away by heavy rain and wind. One evening when a party of naked Zulus armed with assegais came and danced a war-dance in front of her,

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

² " *Sa tristesse augmente tous les jours.*" Extract from unpublished MS.

she almost broke down. The loneliness of the treeless country, cut now by dried-up water-courses, and covered with long yellow grass, impressed her with a closer sense of the spiritual significance of her pilgrimage. "One can almost imagine it possible to trace his footprints, so far is one from mankind in these immense solitudes . . ." she wrote. "As the moment approaches when we shall reach our journey's end, I am torn between impatience to arrive there and dread. . . . I should wish to stay as long as I have courage to remain."

On the afternoon of the 25th they pitched tents at four o'clock in front of the kraal where the Prince had halted on June 1 with Carey. Walking out of her tent that evening with feverish energy, intuition guided her to the very spot where he had fallen.

The scene was not that of the wild tropical ravine she had imagined. Great bare spaces stretched around her in the brilliant moonlight. The grass on which her son had bled has been covered by a layer of cement surrounded by an iron railing. A few paces away were the graves of two English soldiers carefully tended. And the soil of the donga had been raked. The Empress was bitterly disappointed.¹

For a week she remained going constantly to and fro between the kraal and the donga in the intervals of hearing the Zulus give their depositions as to the last fight of the Prince. She ate almost nothing ; she shed no tears. She walked about feverishly, sometimes for six hours in the day. On the night of June 1 she spent the night alone in prayer at the fatal spot. Black forms moved silently among the tall grasses and watched her with curious but not hostile eyes. Perhaps, she thought, the very Zulus

¹ Filon : *Recollections of the Empress Eugénie*.

who had killed her son had come there to offer her their sympathy.¹

"Towards morning," she said, "a strange thing happened. Although there was not a breath of air, the flames of the candle were suddenly deflected, as though some one wished to extinguish them, and I said to *him*, 'Is it indeed you beside me? Do you wish me to go away?'"

So far the intention of her pilgrimage had sustained her. Now came the breakdown. She could not even bear to speak of him.

"My heart overflows and the wound bleeds anew and is powerless to heal . . ." she wrote. "Nobody can fill the immense void which has opened in my existence, and to see people only wearies me without bringing comfort to my heart."² When Canrobert had spoken to her of shattered hopes, "*Ah non*," she had answered simply; "*c'est mon petit que je pleure*."³ (63)

Henceforth she looked upon her life as a sort of pilgrimage. They wondered why she went back to Compiègne or Fontainebleau—why she came back year by year to stay at the Continental Hotel in the Rue de Rivoli and took rooms which looked on the Tuileries. It was to look at the garden where he had played. Like a scarred cathedral raising its towers in the face of the enemy, an emblem of splendour and sorrow, an emblem which was sacred, she would face the indifference or the hiss of the Parisian mob. And then she would look again, as all do who suffer the pains of loss, into the flood of things which swept away what they loved, and wonder if one or other could have been altered to take a different

¹ Marquis de Bassano (afterwards Duc). Unpublished letters.

² Filon: *Memoirs of the Empress*.

³ *Revue Hebdomadaire*, July 24, 1920.

course. But no; she knew that her son must have gone so: "*Qui eût pu l'empêcher d'aller se battre,*" she asked, "*quand il avait, par son père du sang de Bonaparte, et par sa mère . . . par sa mère, du sang de Don Quichotte ?*"¹ (64)

¹ M. Gabriel Hanotaux: *Revue de Paris*, Jan. 15, 1930.

XIII

YEARS OF FORTITUDE

A force de s'élargir par la souffrance l'âme en arrive à des capacités prodigieuses : ce qui la comblait naguère à la faire crever en couvre à peine le fond maintenant. (65)

FLAUBERT : *Correspondance.*

I

EUGÉNIE's struggle of the first ten years of exile had been to constrain her tense nature to a life of inaction and obscurity. It had been no easy task : the hopes on which she built the effort had all been swept away with the one life whom the past had created as a promise for the future. When in her youth she had faced the defection of her lover, she had found a distraction in energy and ambition. These had given her not merely the Crown of France, but a power which finally made her Imperial eminence in the most gorgeous Court in Europe like a fountain of sparkling fire at the heart of an illuminated garden. But in the depth of her nature, courage hid qualities compared with which the exercise of sovereign power was a fragile splendour. She had borne adversity ; now she was to face, at fifty-three, the combat with despair. Ambition had led only to sorrow : energy could no longer promise even vicariously a place in great affairs. A new romance, a new grandeur was offered her : it was to accept in peace a life where genius and instinct could ask for almost nothing, a life for which the impetuous forces

of her gifts seemed ill prepared. She had described herself as "*elle à qui Dieu donna tant de choses, et à qui il enleva, un par un, tout ce qu'il avait donné.*" (66) But the strength which passes serenely through the world's sorrows and disappointments to the life of the spirit did not fail her. Her Spanish spirit had the courage which heightens its nobleness in mourning.

There were times, nevertheless, when the sufferer's quivering nerve could bear no more. An arbitrary bitterness would possess her, and those who brought the days of hope too vividly to her heart were swept out of her life. Not only English friends like Lady Mallet's mother were dropped, but faithful Marie de Larminat who had borne ten years of exile was dismissed from the household. The temper of the ageing Empress seemed to become yet more imperious. Hardly any dared dispute her opinions, and if she tolerated those who did it was not without sharp words about their temper.

She was at first consumed with one thought. It was to find a home for the remains of her dead where, in convenient dignity and associated with the offices of the Church, they would await the company of her own tomb, and finally the tribute of time. Land near Camden was not attainable. Immediately on her return from Zululand she obtained at Farnborough (the Queen had hoped she would be nearer Windsor) a great house with a pinewood at a little distance where she might build a chapel and a house for monks to serve it. Victorian Gothic dominated all three, but she was not dissatisfied. Her abbey, not yet red-brick, was commenced, her chapel finished, and in the spacious house she arranged her memorials of the picturesque dynasty which, at a great crisis, her mastering spirit had striven heroically to preserve for the greater good of France, and of her

son. There around its mistress the Second Empire seemed to have risen from its ashes. There were busts of the first Napoleon, his family, his mother ; of Queen Hortense and Princess Mathilde, of Napoleon III ; there, by Winterhalter, was the Duchess of Alba and the Duchesse de Mouchy, and the Empress among her ladies, and the Empress with her baby. In front of a portrait of Eugène Beauharnais was a bath-chair ornamented with medallions which was her first gift from Victoria. In another salon was David's picture of the first Napoleon crossing the St. Bernard, and endless miniatures of Josephine. In another the Pope's Golden Rose and a painting of Marie Antoinette by Mme Bigée-Lebrun, and head of Louis XVII. There was one room known as the *Cabinet du Prince*, where everything was arranged as the young man had left it at Camden, where veiled pictures hung of him facing the Zulus at the last, and a case holding a gold chain with sacred medals. On this case were written the words : "Thy will be done." Once when Pietri was taking from a drawer a saddle with a torn holster, the Empress appeared at the door. "*Cachez cela*," she cried out, in a harsh tone. Then she entered.¹

2

No sooner was the Empress settled at Farnborough than she found herself obliged to go to Paris. She felt that since Prince Napoleon was being attacked, she owed him support as the head of the party. The Prince Imperial had indeed named Prince Napoleon's son as his successor : this Eugénie always felt to be a mistake. The one need, she was convinced, was to keep the family interests united. She did not hesitate

¹ Duchess of Sermoneta : *Things Past*.

now to fulfil a duty that found no support in her inclinations. All that she feared was to embarrass the Queen. She felt it would be a mistake to write directly, at the same time she wanted Victoria to know her reasons,¹ so she wrote to Lady Ely. The Queen at once communicated with Lord Lyons, who felt that the Empress's explanation had a touching eloquence. Respect and sympathy had indeed greeted the Empress, and two books had been filled with the names of callers.

Just before the Prince's death an heir had been born to the house of Alba. The Empress's thoughts for the next generation—the mother's heart—turned from henceforth towards the country she had always loved. When a second son was born, she arranged that if the family would cede to him the Montijo's Spanish titles, she would leave him her two castles of Arteaga and Belmonte, and in fact all her Spanish property. As the years went on the boys, first the one and then the other, came to school in England, and found another home, another mother, at Farnborough. The Empress was devoted to them, as well as to their cousin Fernando—to whom, on his marriage, she arranged to cede the title of Mora—and to her other Spanish relatives, the Bejarano girls, whose mother the Condesa de Nava de Tajo had lived with her in early years at Carabanchel. When her heir had grown up, she handed over to him the administration of her Spanish properties. The two brothers lived in her house as sons. The Duke of Huescar, as the elder came to be called, visited her each year at Cap Martin in the spring, and both went on to Farnborough in the summer, paying another long visit in the autumn. All their pastimes and amusements interested her. She would always come

¹ *Queen Victoria's Letters*, 2nd series, vol. iii. pp. 404, 406.



[From the portrait by Zuloaga]

THE PRESENT DUKE OF ALBA
In the background THE PALACIO DE LIRIA

down to watch their games : she never tired of planning amusements ; and she loved to spoil them. Her mother's daughter, she was passionately interested in the subject of their marriages. This thought occupied her for years and years : for other members of her household she did succeed in arranging marriages ; but the years went on without finding a wife for either of the Duke of Alba's sons. The Duke died in 1901, and she then had the dearest of her young men as the highest figure among the noblesse of Spain, and the closest friend of the young King. It was inevitable that she should plan the marriage of Don Alfonso himself.

3

In the great house the Empress maintained a routine which recalled Biarritz in its air of relaxed sovereignty. At one and at eight an excellent meal was served, lively with gay chatter of young relatives and their friends : often a famous general, or a leading politician, would be there. At five in the Chapel, the whole household assembled with the Empress to tell their beads. Once a month a requiem was sung for the dead, and to the end she would be seen kneeling with all her old grace at their tombs, but more usually she heard her Mass in the house, kneeling as a crowned head in the chancel. At ten or eleven in the evening she would retire, responding to the obeisances of her little Court with the famous curtsy, and leaving in the salon a faint scent of violets.

No guest outside her family came more often than Princess Beatrice. Nothing more often took the Empress from Farnborough than visits to the Queen. She was not merely the fallen Sovereign to whom

sympathy owed courtesy ; she was one of the most acute and alert women in England, with a shrewd eye on any turn in politics, and often a deft touch here or there, and with a tireless interest in every fresh turn in science, in invention, or in finance. Yet with all her shrewdness she had little insight. A fulsome letter might deceive her, and people could live with her for years without her really understanding them. Now and again her sympathy with youth misled her into affection for relatives quite unworthy. No one, of course, could have been keener that your guests should enjoy themselves. And in the course of her endless entertaining she was queenly in the triumph of a perfect courtesy. Once, for example, a stout Jewess, no longer young, in a showy auburn wig, while being entertained at Farnborough, said over the tea-table that she was often mistaken for the Empress. Her hostess immediately answered without a hint of mockery, " But it is very flattering for me, Madame, for I am much older than you." ¹

Nothing could alter the fact that she had passed the clouds beyond which kings and princes live in another ether. With a man or a woman of brain, it is no little thing to be known as royal. It produces a faculty all its own. And more than that, it commends to those who have it, as in a lesser way, the peerage, or the diplomatic career, an acceptance in a narrow, privileged but powerful circle who have a peculiar *esprit-de-corps*. No one was more conscious of this than Queen Victoria. After the Prince's death she had become as it were a sister to the Empress. Each knew

Quel baume apporte
Au cœur la présence d'un cœur. (67)

¹ Ethel Smyth, *Streaks of Life*.

They were united not only by their sufferings, but by their strong sense of humour, by a practical turn of affairs, by mutual charm, and not least by the fact that ceremony enabled them to meet on equal terms. Never was Victoria more charming than to Eugénie. Heavy eating and stoutness had accentuated the fact that the Queen was very short, and that she was florid, as though permanently blushing. Beneath the widow's cap set on her tightly drawn hair, her cheeks sagged pendulously above her heavy neck and shapeless figure, which was always covered in thick folds of mourning. Such was the style of the Queen, familiar but unique : by the magic of a secret power she impregnated it at will with painful dread or with a melting graciousness ; for she had the sweetest voice and the sweetest smile. Her Royal personality had all the mysterious power of that of Napoleon III, solidified not only by being British, but by every moral virtue. The consciousness of majesty upheld her not only on occasions of State but from one moment to another : she forfeited not a jot of it even when most domestic or most commonplace. On Eugénie it had always made a great impression, as indeed it did on everybody. Victoria from the beginning she had trusted, adored, and understood. From 1880 on, the friendship of the Queen shone like the sun on her life : her mercurial and explosive mind was steadied by Victoria's methodical habits, steady character, and strong sense. Victoria, on the other hand, was always impressed by the quick perceptions of Eugénie's thought, and its concrete swiftness. Both were remarkable women of affairs, with warm hearts, with characters inflexibly incorrupt and of undeviating sincerity ; both loved a joke ; both rejoiced in the romance of power ; above all both were women. And although the

her patron's kindness. She was to remain in close touch with Eugénie for thirty-five years, and to rise beneath her Imperial wing from obscurity to success. She saw in the Empress a character nobly free from pettiness, from spite, from personal motives, though violent in the expression of her mood. "I have seen her in all sorts of situations and in various moods," writes Dame Ethel Smyth, "in what I cannot describe as other than the highest spirits, and in what, with equal sincerity, must be called a bad temper. But never once have I heard her utter a mean or ungenerous thought." "She never said an unkind word," said Miss Minnie Cochrane. And this was never more noticeable than during the war. When the Kaiser fled, she argued that he must have been forced to it by his advisers. Such was her magnanimity. Her courage was flawless, her honour passionate.

Hers was a nature nobly planned; chivalry, sincerity, generosity to others, pitilessness to self, above all unutterable and unwearying kindness to and thought for others: these were made ever more manifest in the course of years by a mind and sympathy kept young by an amazing interest in the world's events, as regards politics, the gyration of science, and run of new ideas. Even her appearance seemed to become more admirable. The sadness which had marked the expression of her eyes in the days of her glory was now subordinate to the sweetness; for when sorrow has done its worst and been accepted, it becomes peace, and that itself shines with a quiet joy. The beautiful blue eyes had not lost their light, nor their power to change to the gleam of steel. Youth and colouring had retired from her face to leave more eminent the noble design beneath the whitening hair.

Her eyes noted with critical solicitude the militant unworldliness of the musician. "*Vous n'êtes donc jamais lasse de vous faire des ennemis*," (68) she would say, when Miss Smyth boasted her lack of compromise. To the musician's confession that she hated rich people, the Empress cried out in answer: "*Dieu, que c'est bête*." (69) The way she usually showed displeasure was to look straight through the person who had annoyed her; this might last for hours, or in extreme cases for days. Another way was not to answer direct, but to speak her views to a third person; and so to a young girl taking tea or an ice between two sets of tennis, the Empress would pour out her views on foreign policy, protection, colonisation, or bimetallism. In one case, where this had become too obvious, she said to Madame d'Attainville, "*Je m'adresse à toi,—mais à l'intention d'une autre personne*" (70)—the *autre personne* receiving a glance of fierce disdain.

At critical moments, at meals, the toothpick would "turn into a weapon of warfare in the Empress's hands. Brandished right and left, it gave point and emphasis to her argument; put to its proper purpose, she, while she listened with simulated patience to your reply, nothing but the reflection that never was a human body made of more magnificent material than hers relieved your anxiety as to the outcome of so furious an onslaught. Meanwhile her eye would be fixed on you sideways, darting such disgust and aversion that you were thankful it was only a toothpick and not a stiletto." ¹

At first, when invited to dinner at Farnborough Hill, Miss Smyth used to ride over on a bicycle, and to change her clothes behind a tree in the garden. The result did not escape her hostess. "*Emmène*,

¹ Ethel Smyth, *op. cit.*

Miss Smyth," she whispered to the Duchess of Sermoneta, "*et arrange un peu sa robe.*" (71) A carriage, in fact, was afterwards sent for her. The Empress always had a great regard for her, perhaps not least when she abandoned music for window-breaking, in the days when suffragettes were violent. Miss Smyth, dressed in tweeds, with mud up to her knees and wearing a tweed hat, would stalk in among the Second Empire furniture at Farnborough and—since no one ever smoked in the presence of the Empress—would seize the moments when she had withdrawn to puff a cigar, sitting with crossed legs in a smoking-room. This all made such a contrast to the Parisian modes of the 'nineties that it was pain and grief to Pietri, who did once succeed in fighting her out of the house. But Miss Smyth's arrival meant diversion, and the Empress demanded diversion. She would put up with all sorts of people for the sake of a little variety. Monotony was death to her active mind. Her generosity did not stop short, as with most of us, at the toleration of bores, but she turned to the strongest mind present, like steel to the lodestone. From time to time Miss Smyth would be overwhelmingly contradictory. Then the Empress put her with rebellious young Count Clary as "*mauvais caractère, tous les deux*" : or murmured, shaking her head, "*Elle est vraiment trop batailleuse.*"¹ (72)

The household of Farnborough was a home whenever they wanted one for the young Spanish Dukes, and their sister, the Duchess de Sañtona, and any young friends they cared to invite. Jacques de Lesseps and his sister Solange, who married the Count de Mora, also had a home there, and besides them Prince and Princess Clement Metternich (who was a

¹ Ethel Smyth : *Streaks of Life*. Duchess of Sermoneta : *Things Past*, where the grammar of the Empress is misrepresented.

daughter of the Duchess of San Carlos), Count Clary, Count Giuseppe Primoli, and Prince and Princess Murat, Colonel Bonaparte (of Baltimore), Prince Prospero Colonna, the Princess de la Moskowa, Mademoiselle de Castel-Bajac, and the Duchesse de Mouchy came often for long visits. The Duc de Bassano had been at Farnborough till he grew too old and blind to see. There were also of the household Madame d'Attainville and Count Bacciochi. These had gradually taken the place of those who came with her from the Tuileries, like Madame Le Breton and her little bearded Corsican secretary, Franceschini Pietri,¹ one of the only people who dared argue with the Empress, but devoted in his cheerful spirits and unfailing loyalty, and to whom she opened her heart more than to any other. She had a quite particular affection for her sister's son, the Duke of Alba, and for his Duchess, who used to come regularly and long to Farnborough, until they died—the Duke in 1901, the Duchess in 1904. The Duchess, who made a great impression on the Queen, was one of the greatest Spaniards of her time. Fun, simplicity, warmth, nobleness, and judgment so mingled in her as to make her presence glow through the lives of all who knew her. There was never a day when the Empress grew less fond of the society of youth. At the same time, neither her maid Aline nor her Maids-of-Honour ever had an easy life—for her standards of efficiency were ruthless.

5

She was a keen student of the life of Nature. “*Il y a plus d'affinité entre elle et nous que nous ne pensons,*”

¹ This was the brother of the Pietri who had been her last Chief of Police in Paris.

she once wrote.¹ Travel, like sport and all open air things, delighted her. Her love of movement remained to the end a means of combating her sorrow and fixed ideas. When at last exercise began to fail, she felt all her old passion for open air, wild scenery, travel, and above all the sea.² She missed nothing so much from the Empire as *L'Aigle*, but, though at the Prince's death she felt the need for economies had passed, she thought it would not be diplomatic to replace it. As time went on, however, love of the sea gained on diplomacy, and she bought the *Thistle* from the Duke of Hamilton, and would cruise now in the North Sea, now in the Mediterranean. In 1903 she went to Egypt; the next year she essayed a longer journey and spent some weeks in Ceylon, where, at the instance of King Edward, she was lent the Government House at Kandy. This trip to the East gratified an ambition she had cherished since, with the Indian girls at Clifton, she had tried to sail as a stowaway. She came back to Madrid, and among the archives of Liria found that Louis XIV had presented tapestries to the house which at her investigation were found in a lumber room. Alcanizes, the one person to whom she was not Your Majesty, would come and talk to her. She told him it was *idiot*, it was *ridicule* that a man of eighty should dye his beard. "*Il n'a jamais voulu m'épouser*," she said. "*Jamais, Eugénie*," he answered. "*Et je ne t'épouserai point même maintenant*." (73)

In 1894 she bought an estate at Cap Martin, and there in the Villa Cynos, she would, winter after winter, entertain her young relations, and arrange that they should be amused at Monte Carlo. Not

¹ To Mlle de Bassano à propos of the last illness of the Duc de Bassano.

² Miss Vesey's MS.

only her dear Spanish nephews and their friends, not only English friends such as the Hanburys and Lady Currie, but distinguished French Republicans, like M. Paléologue and M. Gabriel Hanotaux, would call on her from time to time to discuss affairs, and bow in admiration before the mingling of so much disappointment with so much courage. Once the Empress Elizabeth came to the hotel at Cap Martin, and the two tragic sovereigns solaced one another in hearing and telling their sorrows, each with "a heart as full of sorrow as the sea of sand." There the Empress learnt the truth of the tragedy of Mayerling : how the Crown Prince had gone there to break with his mistress, only to be answered by the words that she was with child ; how, after scenes of raving, he had shot her, and spent a night beside her body before he shot himself.¹ To the acute mind of Eugénie, the following complications in Austria were clear—the complications which had led to the Sarajevo murder and all that that was to imply to France. In later years she herself went on from Venice to Ischl to spend three days with Franz Josef, while he walked steadily to the doom from which for fifty years the Empress had made every effort to redeem him. When he met her at the station he wore his Legion of Honour. "I am more than touched by it," she said. "I seem to be enwrapped in a dream, and in one of the most charming."²

6

No one could live with her without seeing that the imperious sovereign felt on all occasions the tumult of her warrior blood. In her emphatic talk, she

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

² For an account of this, see Miss Vesey's MS.

would strike the table till the glasses rattled. There were many matters on which she held opinions not merely with strength but fury, and Dame Ethel Smyth having once crossed her in one of these, she seized the musician by both shoulders, ran her out of the smoking-room, and slammed the door on her with the words, "*Allez-vous-en pour vous calmer.*"¹ Of one Royal House she exclaimed (for she never had any patience with Victor Emmanuel), "I would rather see them dragged down than ourselves uplifted. Could I but live to witness their downfall, I would willingly accept an extra spell of purgatory in exchange." And then the passion of contempt would carry her to denounce with all her vigour Cavour and Garibaldi. Her words would become swifter and more rasping till she reached her final gibe at Victor Emmanuel's bad seat on a horse.

She showed, however, nothing but magnanimity in her reference to the German royalties, and always kept in touch with the Empress Frederick. When, on June 27, 1907, the German Emperor, on board the *Hohenzollern*, sailed into the same Norwegian fjord as the Empress on the *Thistle*, she received his call in great restraint, although she had always taken his mother's side. To her personally, he had always been most courteous. He ranted against France, he ranted against England. She warned him as they parted that he had shaken thrones enough.²

Pondering these things in her heart, she saw the danger of war. Advice from England kept her in close touch with the development of affairs, and she asked herself how the situation could best be met.

¹ Ethel Smyth : *Streaks of Life*.

² Paléologue : *Entretiens*. Cf. Miss Vesey's MS.

In intimate touch with the Royal family as she was, as well as with leaders both in France and in England, she insisted that the triple alliance should be well prepared.

Indeed, as a power behind the scenes, she was still a personality in Europe. Her acute sense of diplomacy, her unfailing memory, were at the service of her enterprise, and her connections with the English and the Spanish royalties as well as with Lord Lansdowne, another intimate friend who, through two critical years after King Edward's accession, was Foreign Secretary, enabled her to make many effective moves—moves all the more effective because they were made so quietly. She greatly felt King Edward's death, for they had always felt a great affection for each other, and he had always gone out of his way to do her kindness.¹

Her sense of dignity was innate. But she had attained to so high a position now that either self-assertion or self-defence would have compromised it. Except in her conversations with M. Paléologue, she never attempted to explain or to justify herself, or even the Empire. Napoleon's request for silence she quietly honoured through the years: to her detractors she made no retort. Bismarck she saw fall from power, and give way to scoldings and vituperations which gained nothing in force from the avowals by which they were accompanied. With these on the one side, and the documentary evidence which she possessed on the other, the Empress could have crushed, and even blasted, her accusers had she chosen to turn to such an end her unwearied energy. But for herself, in her intercourse with men, she made no plea.

She had a passion for new inventions. She learned

¹ Lee: *Life of King Edward*. Miss Vesey's MS.

XIV

THE FINAL VINDICATION

Leaguered in fire
 The wild black promontories of the coast extend
 Their savage silhouettes :
 The sun in universal carnage sets,
 And, halting higher,
 The motionless storm-clouds mass their sullen threats,
 Like an advancing mob in sword-points penned,
 That, balked, yet stands at bay.
 Mid zenith hangs the fascinated day,
 In wind lustrated hollows crystalline,
 A wan Valkyrie whose wide pinions shine
 Across the ensanguined ruins of the fray,
 And in her hand swings high o'erhead,
 Above the waste of war,
 The silver torchlight of the evening star
 Wherewith to search the faces of the dead.

EDITH WHARTON : *An Autumn Sunset.*

I

WHEN the war began, the Empress, who was within two years of ninety, was at last beginning to show the signs of her great age. Her full and gracious figure began to wither and bend ; her cheeks lost their firmness ; her skin grew wrinkled and furrowed ; under the white hair, her complexion faded ; her lips lost their colour ; her nostrils were pinched ; her eyes sank deep into her head ; the eyeballs became glassy and fixed ; her hands were the hands of a skeleton. There were times when she looked more like the ghost of grandeur than like a woman.

But the sweetness, the grace and majesty still were there. The eyes, in spite of everything, were still extraordinary ; the fineness of line unspoilt. In the words alike of the Duchess of Santoña and of Lady Mallet, "She was a beautiful woman to the day of her death."¹

The war made a great change in her life. She could no longer escape to Cap Martin. "I think of the sunny headland," she wrote on January 11, 1915, "but this year it will be only in dream : other duties come before the great pleasure of warming my old bones in the life-giving sun of the South."¹ Not only did she abandon travel, but she strictly rationed herself. Prince and Princess Victor Napoleon, finding their presence a difficulty in Belgium, took refuge with their servants and children in her hospitality, and remained there for the whole four years of the war. But the Empress, who even gave up her car to them, did not stop at what many an old lady might have thought was more than a sufficient invasion of her privacy. In a short time Farnborough Hill had become a hospital for wounded officers, which was at one time under the direction of Lady Haig and later of Miss Vesey. No modern appliance seemed to her to cost too much, no means of comfort too complicated for her to devise, if she thought it would help. She wrote to the Duke of Peñaranda to send her some further thousands of pounds that she might have all means ready. Everything that could be done to strengthen a wounded man's hold on life was welcome to her, even if it was the presence of a flirt. "It will do them good to be in love," she said. If a case were slow or doubtful, she felt for the sick with a mother's anxiety. One boy, whose third operation was extremely

¹ Unpublished letter to Mademoiselle Pauline de Bassano.

serious, affected her so much that they said, "One fears as much for the Empress as for him, poor boy." ¹ The one or two deaths in the hospital almost broke her heart. "*Il est impossible*," she wrote, "*de ne pas penser à cette belle jeunesse qui expirait dans la gloire, laissant tant de cœurs meurtris. Cette terrible guerre m'accable profondément.*" ² (75)

One of the things that delighted her was the ease of manner in the young men, though few were of what was known as the officer class. It delighted her that they could be both dignified and grateful. They might before a portrait of Napoleon III mistake him for Poincaré, and convulse the Empress with laughter. It was a joke she loved to repeat. But if they knew nothing of history, never mind! "*Comme ils sont foncièrement bien élevés, les Anglais*," she would say, "*n'importe d'où ils viennent.*" ³ (76) Her hospital was such a delight to her that she kept it running as long as possible, and even when the officers had moved to Aldershot they were still, she said, to look on Farnborough as their home. "Because I have known you in bed," she said, "and one can't be more intimate than that"; ⁴ and how proudly she said at the last: "Not one of them but when he was well again has come to see me." ⁵

2

In the middle of the war another sorrow was thrust upon her: her dear, faithful old Pietri lost his reason, and believing—like the Empress Charlotte—that they were trying to poison him, his tragic delusion did not

¹ Ethel Smyth: *Streaks of Life*.

² Unpublished letters to Mademoiselle de Bassano and the Baroness de Beauverger.

³ Ethel Smyth, *op. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*



[From the drawing by M. Ferdinand Bac

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

stop short at the Empress herself. "Look at this woman dressed in black, this woman to whom I have vowed all my respect, all my devotion, all my life, for whom at this very moment I would gladly shed my blood," he had said, pointing at her with his quivering finger. "And now when I am old, she wants me dead. She has told her cook to poison me."

The Empress had taken his hand. "*Pietri, Pietri,*" she cried, "but you don't recognise me any more. You don't know who is talking to you now!"

In answer, he bowed from his arm-chair till the velvet cap in his hand touched the ground, and said solemnly: "I know you well. You are Her Majesty, the Empress Eugénie."

"So you see," said the Empress, "there is no trial which I have been spared."

He died suddenly in 1916, and he was buried, as he had asked, under the pathway that leads to the crypt of the Abbey, so that as the Empress went there to pray her feet might pass over his body. His death had been a consolation to her. "At the very end he was nice to me," she said. "He kissed my hand, begging me not to leave him. But I told him that he must sleep, and an hour later it was over." But she poignantly felt the loss of him. The last had gone to whom she could speak of the past without having to explain.¹

3

There are two habits of mind which are very common in old age: one is that the immediate past grows dim and the thoughts of youth come back; the other is that affection for others shows itself in a great fear for their welfare, especially in small things.

¹ Ethel Smyth: *Streaks of Life*.

Neither of these escaped the ageing Empress. She would fuss over little details, and be terrified lest guests should lose a train. The other took her back to the ways of her own country. She had always kept at hand a priest who could listen to her confessions in Spanish. "*Et moi je me réserve pour le jambon d'Espagne,*" (77) she would say as she looked down her menu. Now her patriotism was intensely Spanish. She even accused the Duke of Alba of not being Spanish enough nor Catholic enough. She would argue vehemently that Spain should not enter the war. She turned her fierce admiration of England to a vindication of her native country while she railed at "Dora." Her acute judgment saw that in those years the temper of England was no longer what she most admired: the country was consumed by hatred, and it is too true that we grow like what we hate. She felt anxious enough. "One cannot long endure having one's mind at such a tension," she wrote, but patriotism retained its dignity! ¹ It shocked her that English people should come and say that they would never again speak to Germans. "*Ma chère,*" she said once with great firmness to an English lady who was speaking in this tone, "*il ne faut pas continuer la haine pendant toute la vie.*" ² (78). In the moments when the ruthlessness of Bismarck had been most menacing to her, she had never tarnished her dignity with unjust accusations of the enemy. Love and admiration for those who were fighting on her side rather than vituperation of those against her was the mentality of the Empress Eugénie in war, whether against Bismarck, the Zulus, or Middle Europe. She felt as she watched the war from Farnborough what she had felt on July 26, 1870, when she sent to the Prince

¹ Unpublished letters to Mademoiselle de Bassano and the Baroness de Beauverger.

² Private information.

Imperial *The Imitation of Christ*. "*A mon fils bien aimé, Louis Napoleon,*" she had written in it. "*Que Dieu protège la France, qu'il te donne une vie glorieuse, et plus tard, bien tard, une mort Chrétienne. Soigne bien ton père et pense à ta mère. Eugénie.*"¹ (79) That volume had been found among the Prince's possessions at Itelezi : from the moment it came back into his mother's hands she never moved without it. Nor did her spirit move from the standards it implied.

4

Her mother's heart glowed with hero-worship of both Foch and Haig. When the end came she felt a solemn exultation. It was, she said, her first joy since 1870.² They asked her for a public pronouncement, but all she would say was that she was glad that it was over. She felt, nevertheless, that her last regency was vindicated at last. Her old magnanimity towards the French Republic now became enthusiasm.

On the Sunday after the Armistice, Mr. Wickham Steed, the Foreign Editor of *The Times*, came to Farnborough and had a long talk with the Empress.

"Ah, that Clémenceau !" she said. "Were he my worst enemy I would love him ; I could even kiss him for the good he has done to France."

"May I give him that message, Madame ?" asked the Editor.

"No, no message. I died in 1870." To tell the truth, the Empress had no love for Clémenceau.

"But, Madame, 1870 is now dead. Your Majesty can live again."

"No, no. I am quite dead. But Clémenceau made a blunder. He should have attended the

¹ Unpublished original in the Palacio de Liria.

² From Dom Elie Herment's MS. and Miss Vesey's.

Te Deum at Notre-Dame. He would have united France. He would have taught a great lesson of moderation and unity. He might have become Consul."

"I fancy Clémenceau cherishes no such ambition."

"No matter. He can make good his mistake. A fortnight hence he will go to Strasbourg, must visit the Cathedral. He may still unite France and give the lesson of unity and moderation."

"May I give M. Clémenceau this advice from Your Majesty?" asked Mr. Steed again.

"No; I told you I died in 1870. Now what are you going to do for my poor country?"

"Why, Madame, every Englishman is ready to do all in his power, and more, for France."

"I do not mean France," the Empress answered, with great decision. "It is of Spain I am speaking."¹

5

In December 1919 the Empress came for the last time to Paris, and looked again at the garden where the Prince had played fifty and sixty years before. Among the sovereigns whom Paris entertained in those days of triumph, this one was the most appealing of all. For the last time she saw M. Paléologue. She rejoiced that France should be again intact. She told him that she had given to the Cathedral of Rheims the talisman of Charlemagne on which she set such store. She had long hesitated what to do with it. "When all is said and done," she had said, "one cannot steal from the dead." But this was due restitution. "My dear friend Queen Victoria," she said, "who had an absolute trust in the Divine justice and goodness, used often to say to me, 'What

¹ *The Times*, July 14, 1920.

we do not understand now, we shall understand some day, in this life or the next. But we can be sure that the explanation will not be withheld.' God has graciously given me the explanation while I can rejoice in it on earth." ¹

As M. Lucien Daudet entered, and saw her profile against the flames of the fireplace, her features, now worn by the years which could not spoil them, seemed like one of those cameos where the stone is all transparent. Her head a little forward, her hands clasped, she was looking into the fire.

As Daudet entered, saying, "*C'est moi, Madame,*" (80) she sat up and her features were lit for an instant by the vivacity of her smile, which soon changed again to resignation. "*Ah, Lucien,*" she said. "*Le petit Lucien,*" though M. Daudet was far from a child. Eager to talk as ever, eloquent in gesture, question and answer coming quick, and often with a laugh, she seemed to mock her many years. Every detail of the Treaty of Versailles was clear to her mind, and so were her principles. "During the war," she said, "I understood that conscience and honour, the only things that for me have any value, I would have sacrificed if that had been enough to save the country." And, fascinated always by the future, she had also the sense that she was living in a pregnant age: "*Estimons nous cependant heureux de vivre à présent : notre époque ne ressemble à aucune autre. Elle est un recommencement plus qu'on ne le croit. Tout est à refaire sur les nouvelles bases. Saura-t-on ?*" (81).

Her hand, fragile but firm, rested an instant on M. Daudet's arm; he saw her face light up before him; in her blue eyes with their large black pupils there was a smile. He saw the thin line which separated the fine curve of her nose from the straight

¹ Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

brow ; he saw the deep wrinkles which lay like a mask on her fine features, and the white hair above the black cloak had passed from him for ever.¹

A few days later she was at Cap Martin ; but it grieved her more than ever that she could not see. In Paris she had asked the doctors to operate for her cataract. Hugenschmidt, La Personne, and Vidal had all attempted to dissuade her. What doctor who knew that she was ninety-three and was suffering also from uræmia could think of giving her chloroform ? They thought it dangerous enough for her to do the journey to Cap Martin. But she insisted. " I am just an old fluttering bat : nothing more," she said ; " but like the butterflies I feel I have always to make for the sunlight." ²

Even in the sunlight she drooped. She ceased to come down to lunch or dine. One of her usual heavy colds settled on her, and she could not shake it off. When the Duke of Alba arrived in March, as he had always done until the war, he was shocked by the change in her morale. La Personne's fear that the left eye, which was free from cataract, would itself quickly fail preyed on her mind : and indeed the fear was being realised with appalling swiftness. One day the Duke went up to her room, and found that she could hardly see the cards to play patience : she took his arm and walked up and down the landing at the top of the stairs. " I do not mind solitude," she said, " I am so used to it ; but a life without books or the newspapers would be quite intolerable to me. Happily I shall not be here for long. I am so tired of life that I want only to leave it. I would like to come and see you this spring. They have told me that I shall soon lose my sight ; and I want

¹ L. Daudet : *L'Inconnue*.

² Paléologue : *Entretiens*.

to see Spain for the last time. It is very likely that in the country where I first saw the light, I shall see it also last.”¹ “I must breathe again,” she said, “the scent of the orange blossoms of Seville.” The doctor at Cap Martin still attempted to dissuade her from travelling. “But, doctor,” she answered, “I really am not immortal. I absolutely must die one day, and I want to see Spain once more.”

6

On April 22, attended by Count Bacciochi and Madame d’Attainville, she arrived at Gibraltar by sea. The Duchess of Tamames, who as Doña Luisa, her sister’s daughter, had lived with her at the Tuileries, came to meet her, with the Duke of Alba, the Duke of Peñaranda, and the Duchess of Santoña. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, the Governor, had placed his yacht at her disposal, and went on board her steamer to pay an official call. The Duke of Alba found her in the highest spirits, chatting to the Governor. An hour later, she landed at Algeciras.²

She was deeply touched to be again on Spanish soil. Although she had been up since seven in the morning, she received the Spanish authorities in the afternoon. When they warned her to put on black spectacles, she said, “The sun of Andalusia has never done my eyes harm.” Her return to Andalusia simply filled her with joy. “Now I am home again,” she said. “I smell the old scents from the blossom. Why do they tell me the sun isn’t good for me? The sun is my friend.”³

How was she to go on to Seville? The railway

¹ Unpublished MS. by the Duke of Alba.

² Duke of Alba’s MS.

³ L. Daudet : *L’Inconnue*,

company offered her a special train : the King had placed a destroyer at her disposal : but so as to give the least trouble she insisted on motoring, and started at a little after ten next morning. The return of her vitality was wonderful. As she sat in the car with her maid, Aline Pelletier—who had followed her with unswerving devotion from the Tuileries—and Madame d'Attainville, she pointed out Tarifa where in 1231 her ancestor had thrown down his dagger to the Moors : at Janda she described the details and legends of the Goth's victory over the Moors. At Xerez, where she lunched, she received a British officer who had been in Zululand with the Prince Imperial. Although she arrived in Seville the same day, she insisted on looking over the house and garden, dressed for dinner, and sat up till midnight.

Las Dueñas, the palace in which the Duke of Alba was entertaining her, is in the heart of Seville. The indented arches of the Mudéjar style of the Alhambra fill its patios with a charm at once insinuating and dignified. Three tall palms rise from its central court. Honeysuckle and bougainvillea climb its walls. The secluded garden around it throws out on the spring air the scent of orange blossom, which mingles with that from a thousand Andalusian flowers.

As she climbed the staircase from the patio to the gallery above, pictures of the French sovereigns painted sixty years before met the failing gaze of Eugénie. Here, where she had tasted joy with her sister in the days before she was an Empress, she came home for her last triumph.

Before she had risen the next morning, the King of Spain had already called, and at 11.30 she returned his visit in the glittering court of the Alcazar. She sat in the gardens with the Queen, whose mother was to have married her son ; on the Sunday when

she went to Mass at the Cathedral she was received at the door with all the pomp of a reigning sovereign. Everywhere, as she drove among them, the people of Seville greeted her with an affectionate ovation which deeply touched her. The Cardinal, the Captain General, the Military Governor, each when he visited her was astonished at her memory and her wit.

One evening was arranged for Spanish dancers and singers to come with their guitars, and she, beating time with her hands, vibrated to their music more than any there. Yet another evening, she acted as hostess at a great dinner party of forty which included the King and Queen, and in the ball which followed it sat up till close on two in the morning. The Duke drove her out into the country with the Duchess of Santoña. She took the greatest interest in the Fiesta di Derribo where the young bulls are tested ; they presented to her the famous torero Joselito, whom she took to her heart. When he was killed a few weeks later at Talavera, they did not dare to tell her. When at last she knew, her only words were, " Has he a mother ? "

7

On May 2 she went on to Madrid. Every one in Spain wanted to see her, and she devoted herself to long lists of callers, to luncheons, and to dinners. With the leaders of intellectual life in Madrid—Maura, Dato, Romanones, Picon, Altamira—she engaged in long talks over the fortunes of Spain. Great dinners were given in her honour, and the presence in Madrid of a half-blind lady of ninety-three gave a new liveliness to the summer season. The Palacio de Liria in all its history had never seen more

brilliant weeks, and when the French Ambassador called, it was the final act of reparation on the part of France. The scene of her early Calvary had become her Canossa.

Ready to motor hundreds of miles in the day to see the homes of her younger relatives, she wished to know everything and to see everything. She talked more of the past than ever before, and yet her main interest was in the present and future of Spain. She showed herself at each moment abreast of the hour. She threw ceremony aside and saw her relations constantly: she allowed them to smoke in her presence: she refused to be mollicoddled.¹ She would send down the Duke's old nurse to bring her up special Spanish dishes of her youth which were not in her régime; in fact, one of her last battles was fought for asparagus, which she refused to surrender to the counsels of any doctor.²

Suddenly, in the midst of her activity, she exclaimed, "I must see or die." She had heard of Dr. Barraquer of Barcelona, who could extract cataract without giving chloroform. "*Le médecin*," she had said in her imperious tone to the Duke of Alba, "*où est il? Il faut l'appeler.*" (82) He at once came and was satisfied. "Fine eyes!" he said. The aged Empress did not disdain what she took as one of the old compliments to their fineness. She faced the operation unflinchingly: it lasted only a minute and a quarter, being performed by a principle of suction, with the aid of a leech. It was perfectly successful. She rejoiced in it, not only for itself, but as an encouragement to a young doctor and as a fresh triumph for Spain. For a few days she was tended by Aline Pelletier and a young English friend,

¹ L. Daudet: *L'Inconnue*.

² The Duke of Alba's MS.

Hilda Hollings, in whom she felt trust and affection, who was an experienced and skilful nurse, and who had met her in Seville. For a few days her eyes were kept bandaged : and then she opened them once more to human seeing. For a while the people around her, she said, looked like the portraits of El Greco ; then they became those of Velazquez.¹ She opened her Cervantes, and her joy in being able to read it was touching to see. She took up her pen and wrote *Viva España !* ”

Wonderful as her spirits had been before the operation, it was nothing to her verve now that she again could see. In compliment to Barraquer, she felt bound to visit Barcelona. Burgos then attracted her. She planned a journey in the Austurias to see Santander, Bilbao, and Covadonga, and to make a stay in her castle at Arteaga. But finally she arranged that she would go back to Farnborough, and discuss with the Duke of Alba the details of his marriage, which gratified one of her long ambitions.

Her revival of energy was not to last for so long. The Duke had left for London on July 9. The Empress had had another cold, but from that she seemed to recover. On the 10th she felt in the afternoon a little ill, and went to bed. Early in the evening she felt better. “ It will soon be over,” she said, but a few hours later she knew the words must bear another meaning. Attended by her devoted Aline, who from the days of the Tuileries had served her in every mood with the unalterable devotion of heart and body (for they loved each other), she foresaw her end with that supernatural calm which, in the words of St. Augustine, is for those who go to God the most precious grace, and for those who remain behind the sweetest consolation. Hilda Hollings was with her then, to do

¹ L. Daudet : *op. cit.*

in her dying hours whatever the skill of an Englishwoman could do. In the early Sunday morning, murmuring prayers, she finally lost consciousness.

Did she then remember the song youth had sung to her in that house, or did she trace the threads of violet and of gold in the historic tapestry of her life? Courage had had always to face alternations of splendour and sorrow. Generosity had had to survive disappointment on disappointment. The nobility of Spain, the Bonaparte ideals, the thrones of Spain, of France, of Austria, of England, and through all the adequacy of the Catholic religion—these themes had been her destiny. Imagination dallies with conjectures, but nothing revealed her final thoughts. They knew she was content to die among those who appreciated how much she loved them. Through her whole life her warm heart had craved affection.

The end came very quietly on the Sunday morning at eight o'clock. A priest had administered Extreme Unction and said the Prayer of Commendation on which she had thought for so long. The great array of saints and martyrs, of angels and archangels, of thrones and dominations, of principalities and powers in whose name the Church had sent her forth through the unplumbed mystery to where her eyes would see unfailingly eternal things, were to greet one who in the drama of vicissitude had already undergone, in her own nature, the ordeal of fire and flame.

8

The King of Spain gave orders that her funeral should be that of a reigning sovereign. Her body was carried to Paris, to Havre, to Farnborough, where Kings and Queens headed the distinguished company

present at the funeral requiem. There in the crypt, on the niche above the altar, with the tomb of Napoleon III on one side and that of the Prince Imperial on the other, a great vessel of stone, central, visible to all, bears the simple inscription

“EUGÉNIE.”

9

The Empress had made many wills. She was not anxious that her Spanish properties should have complications with English law, and so she had always had two wills—one in English, the other in Spanish—and attested by the Spanish Consul General. But the last had been made in Madrid. Finally, two wills were executed: one for her property in Spain, one for her property outside it. They left all her Spanish possessions to the Duke of Peñaranda, who, as she had arranged, was to inherit also the principal Montijo titles. A large legacy was left to the Duke of Alba. Her English and Italian property she left to Prince Napoleon, with the command that Farnborough and its treasures should remain intact. Unfortunately this direction was not carried out. After the Prince's death in 1924 there were fresh duties to pay, and his heir's advisers left the collection to the mercies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who handed it over to the auctioneers. Thousands of pounds were left in the will to charities, and there were none dear to the Empress who had been forgotten.

There was a movement of surprise when it was found that to her god-daughter, the Queen of Spain, she had left only a locked china box shaped like a fan. And this was finally carried to Kensington

Palace, where it was opened, perhaps with some impatience, by the young Queen. As the lid was lifted the Queen's eyes were dazzled by the one ornament which had been reserved from the sale of the jewels of the Tuileries. It was a magnificent tiara of emeralds and diamonds. Mischievous to the last, the daughter of the Guzmans had played this little prank on the Princess whom she had designed to reign over the Court where she herself had been a maid-of-honour. It could hardly have escaped her attention that a Spaniard would so be saved from paying to another country thousands of pounds in death duties.

10

In one sense her spirit had passed into that unknown of light and blessing into which the Church pledges to guide her faithful children, to give them back in peace the company that they have loved long since. The life of the Empress for forty years had been guided by that thought. But there are some personages who, by the records they leave, continue through the ages to live as a vital force in successive generations, not only because they were, once in time, a motive power in great events, but because the intense life of their spirits leaves in the painted—or perhaps even the written—portrait, as in the echo of their words, the power which they exerted by their presence in the flesh. “*Ma légende est faite,*” Eugénie once said, “*au début du règne, je fus la femme futile ne s’occupant que de chiffons ; et vers la fin de l’Empire je suis devenue la femme fatale qu’on rend responsable de toutes les fautes et de tous les malheurs ! Et la légende l’emporte toujours sur l’histoire.*” (83) Legend always gets the better of history? Not always! In the end, never!

Gradually the documents are opened, the confessions explain, the facts are sifted, the characters are recognised, the truth prevails. The Empress had not been dead ten years when it was recognised by the veteran historian of the Third Republic that the noble heroism of her will made her the greatest woman who ever reigned in Paris, and that if her insight had had its way she would have saved France with the Empire, so that her dynasty would be reigning still.

The secret of the rich contrasts which made her to some a puzzle and to others a marvel, but to all heroic, the secret which like white fire fused to magic iridescence—as in a lancet of Chartres—her faith with her sense of hard fact, her dignity with her quick turns of tears or rage, her quixotry with her shrewdness, her generosity with her careful acumen, her grace with her imperiousness, her ceremony with her simplicity, her intellectual sparkle with her great warmth of heart—this secret is the character of her country when, in its joust between idealism and immediacy, between perfection and human nature, it is most itself—noble, generous, vibrant. With Blanche of Castile's, the name and fate of Eugénie de Guzman go down to the ages. She died, as she had lived, the daughter of Spain.

■

APPENDIX

(1) *Page 34.*—"It is only little girls now who vibrate to great things."

(2) *Page 41.*—Accents and spelling are full of childish mistakes. "I so much want you to come," she wrote before her tenth birthday, "that I think every day you are going to: it's three weeks now I have been asking if you aren't soon coming." So the letters run. "Ah, my dear Papa, how I long to press you in my arms. . . . My dear Papa, you can't imagine how much I love you. . . . My dear Mama, I am suffering so from not having seen you. My dear Papa, when shall I see you, my heart sighs for you."

(3) *Page 42.*—"Will you send me some money to buy a muff, for I am tall now and I would like to be in the fashion on the 19th of the month. It is my fête. . . . We have a funny sort of thing at Paris: it is infernal machines."

(4) *Page 43.*—"Every hair a lioness."

(5) *Page 55.*—"An attack, as sudden as it was unexpected, dragged his consent out of him."

(6) *Page 55.*—"Your wife has just given birth to a child," it was said to run: "no fuss or scandal which will recoil on you or on me! Keep quiet, and I promise you it is the last time that I shall ask you to acknowledge what is not yours."

(7) *Page 66.*—"My child," was the answer, "it is better to know remorse than regret."

(8) *Page 68.*—

"MY DEAR COUNTESS,—

"For a long time I have loved your daughter and desired to make her my wife. I come then to-day to ask you for her hand, for no one is better able than she to make me happy, or worthier to wear a crown. I shall beg your consent to say nothing of this plan before we have made our arrangements.

"Believe me, Madame, Yours in sincere friendship,
"NAPOLEON."

(9) *Page 81.*—The passion for Empire has given place to the Empire of passion.

(10) *Page 89.*—"Since yesterday, I have been called Your Majesty : it seems to me like play acting."

(11) *Page 89.*—"Dear sister, goodbye. My last thought before my wedding is for you. I am going to get ready to start. With my best love,
EUGÉNIE."

(12) *Page 90.*—"What they want is a baby !"

(13) *Page 97.*—An untranslatable pun on St. Cloud. "*Tirée à quatre épingles*" is the equivalent of "done up to the nines."

(14) *Page 113.*—"And to think they reproached *me* for my dress."

(15) *Page 115.*—"In society."

(16) *Page 122.*—"Your Majesty can win all hearts."

(17) *Page 123.*—"That fits the Queen of the Seas, but not a landsman like me."

(18) *Page 125.*—"Such was my conversation with the Queen, and eleven months after the fruit of it was the Prince Imperial."

(19) *Page 125.*—"During those days the only matter of discussion in Paris, at least in drawing-rooms, was the pregnancy of women, childbirth, and miscarriages. One would have said that at Paris there was no one but accoucheurs and midwives." . . .
"It is a fault to repair."

(20) *Page 129.*—"Because I give orders to the cannon and don't give orders to the sea."

(21) *Page 131.*—"It is too much."

(22) *Page 136.*—"Don't be stupid : we have had enough of that nonsense !"

(23) *Page 145.*—"I have discovered a fine thing at Paris," he said to another lady. "Parisian ladies wear no drawers : it was an unclouded sky which opened to my gaze."

(24) *Page 145.*—Very ill-reputed.

(25) *Page 152.*—"When I saw my sister's body carried away, it seemed that they were tearing out my soul."

(26) *Page 157.*—"It is power, and power wherever we meet it appears to advantage amidst the universal weakness around us."

(27) *Page 158.*—"Calm, and deeply disguised, even to those who know him most intimately his soul is marble, like his face."

(28) *Page 165.*—"She has a great responsibility in this affair."

(29) *Page 169.*—On the wings of a bird. "What wings, and what a bird!"

(30) *Page 170.*—"Leave things to take care of themselves."

(31) *Page 170.*—"It is you we want to marry: don't force us into a marriage of convenience."

(32) *Page 170.*—"Up to now I have had but mistresses: I am looking for a wife."

(33) *Page 172.*—"No dreaming, gentlemen!"

(34) *Page 172.*—

For here were three who
Wanted to fight, too.

(35) *Page 173.*—"The Emperor wants peace, and they keep accusing him of wanting to disturb it. He is without ambition, and nevertheless all your journals accuse him of seeking for pretexts to seize the Rhine. He has no ambition to extend his territory, but he cannot be jealous enough of the influence of France. The Crimean War cost us so dear that we deserve at least to be listened to: silence could have been dignified, and to Poland even useful, to a certain extent; but we have had neither prestige nor advantage from our diplomatic campaign. Let us hope then that a congress will shed light to give us what we have failed to obtain, and if it comes to nothing, let each country assume before all Europe the responsibilities which will then fall upon each country wholly and entirely."

(36) *Page 196.*—"Every hair a lioness."

(37) *Page 196.*—"Never," wrote Metternich, "since I have known the Imperial pair have I seen the Emperor so absolutely nothing, and the Empress taking our interests to heart with such extreme enthusiasm and zeal."

(38) *Page 209.*—"Never did we have more guests and less friends."

(39) *Page 209.*—"It is a sensation which the music of Mozart gives when the commander is to appear."

(40) *Page 209.*—"All is to be resolved at once."

(41) *Page 211.*—"The Empress is very sprightly. One sees her on the look-out for women of good style, and above all foreigners."

(42) *Page 212.*—"Her characteristic excitability."

(43) *Page 213.*—"He had been," wrote General du Barail, "the confessor of the court ladies, who found him very agreeable. I believe that after an attempt at explaining the sacred mysteries, he addressed himself to those which are profane."

(44) *Page 218.*—"Good-bye, my Lord . . . and above all, look well after your health."

(45) *Page 222.*—"With what liveliness of phrase, what grace of gesture, what fire in her glance, she always spoke."

(46) *Page 224.*—"They are worth very little. . . . But we are alone, Madame, are we not? Then I shall tell you. They are worth nothing at all."

(47) *Page 227.*—"And if he could even ride!"

(48) *Page 236.*—"I carried away with me the gracious and impressive memory of how a great heart could inspire a woman with intellect and inspire a Sovereign worthy of her rank with ambitions for the good of her people."

(49) *Page 244.*—"Never," said the Empress, "have I seen a war begin with such a tightening at the heart."

(50) *Page 248.*—"What a devil of a child!"

(51) *Page 255.*—"What a nightmare, and what a future before us with the omnipotence of Bismarck!"

(52) *Page 259.*—"I feel that she is a saint."

(53) *Page 261.*—"What is the matter?"

"Your Majesty must be brave: the news is bad."

"The Emperor is dead?"

"Would to God that he were dead, Madame! The Emperor is a prisoner: the Army is imprisoned."

(54) *Page 265.*—"Madame, the hour of supreme peril has come! We will do our whole duty."

(55) *Page 266.*—"One must fall without embarrassing the defence."

(56) *Page 273.*—"Is it possible?" she asked. "Have you really seen? Have you really heard? Then one has no more friends in France when one is unfortunate."

"Madame," answered Chévreau, "my brother and I will show you that there are those whom misfortune makes more faithful than any power. Where you go, we will go."

(57) *Page 276.*—"One must be daring."

(58) *Page 276.*—"There is the Empress!"

(59) *Page 287.*—"How funny the English are!"

(60) *Page 327.*—"Thank you, Madame, for all your kindness."

(61) *Page 328.*—"They won't do anything to this poor man. Ah no, please! Perhaps he has a mother."

(62) *Page 328.*—"I want to know nothing, I know that they have killed him, that's enough."

(63) *Page 335.*—"Ah, no, it is my child I mourn."

(64) *Page 336.*—"Who could have held him back from going to fight when he had on his father's side the blood of Bonaparte, and on his mother's . . . his mother's, Don Quixote's."

(65) *Page 337.*—"Through enlarging itself by suffering the soul reaches a gigantic greatness: what but a while ago overwhelmed it to bursting now hardly covers the bottom."

(66) *Page 338.*—"One to whom God had given so much, and from whom He took, one by one, all that He had given."

(67) *Page 342.*—"Ah, how the presence of one heart
Is balm to other's smart."

SULLY-PRUDHOMME.

(68) *Page 347.*—"But you are never tired of making enemies."

(69) *Page 347.*—"Good heavens, what a fool you are!"

(70) *Page 347.*—"I am speaking to you, but it is aimed at some one else."

(71) *Page 348.*—"Take Miss Smyth out, and fix up her dress."

(72) *Page 348.*—"Bad tempered both of them. . . . She is really too militant."

(73) *Page 350.*—"He never wanted to marry me." . . .
 "Never, Eugénie, and I shall not marry you even now."

(74) *Page 355.*—"I attach so much importance to sustaining the moral which is the motive power of so many things. . . . We must look in a dark sky for the point of light which helps us to live, for otherwise we should lose all our light among so many tempests."

(75) *Page 358.*—"One cannot but think of those fine young men dying in glory, leaving so many hearts bruised. This terrible war completely crushes me."

(76) *Page 358.*—"How they are fundamentally gentlemen, the English, no matter what their origins."

(77) *Page 360.*—"But *I* shall reserve myself for the Spanish ham."

(78) *Page 360.*—"My dear, you must not keep up hatred all your life."

(79) *Page 361.*—"To my beloved son, Louis Napoleon. God protect France, may He grant you a glorious life, and at last, at long last, a Christian death. Look after your father and think of your mother. EUGÉNIE."

(80) *Page 363.*—"It is I, Madam."

(81) *Page 363.*—"But still, let us count ourselves happy to live at present : our epoch is unlike any other. More than they think, it is a new beginning. Everything is to be reconstructed on new foundations. Do they realise it ?"

(82) *Page 368.*—"The doctor, where is he ? You must tell him to come."

(83) *Page 372.*—"My legend is made : at the beginning of the reign I was the futile female with no care but fal-lals : and towards the end of the Empire I had become the fatal female who was held responsible for every fault and every misfortune : and legend always gets the better of history."

INDEX

A

Abeken, M., 241
 Adelaide, Princess, 64, 65
 Adèle, Mdle, 312
 Adelon, 247
 Aguado, Vicomtesse, 273
 Alba, Duchess of, 29, 30, 43, 57,
 62, 98, 150, 151, 152, 154, 162,
 211
 Alba, Duke of, 51, 202, 341, 349,
 360, 364, 365, 366, 367, 371
 Alcanizes, Marquis of, 44, 53, 69
 Alexander, Czar, 171, 172
 Alfred, Prince, 235
 Altamira, Count, 367
 Amadeo, Prince, 238
 Amoros, Colonel, 41
 Attainville, Mme d', 347, 349,
 365, 366
 Auber, 88
 Aumale, Duc d', 151, 163

B

Bacciochi, Count, 61, 62, 64, 132,
 349, 365
 Barail, General du, 114, 186, 213,
 256
 Baroque, 158, 255
 Barraquer, Dr., 368, 369
 Barthez, Dr., 128, 133, 134, 214
 Bassano, Duc de, 323, 327, 329,
 333
 Bassano, Duchess de, 84
 Bauer, Bernard, 52-3, 213, 234
 Bauffremont, Prince de, 116
 Bazaine, Marshal, 166, 189, 293,
 296
 Beaconsfield, Lord, 320, 323
 Beatrice, Princess, 318, 327, 341
 Beaufremont, Prince de, 116,
 278
 Beauharnais, Prince Eugène, 85

Beauregard, Countess of. *See*
 Howard, Miss
 Bédoyère, Madame de la, 112, 273
 Bélanger, Marguerite, 181, 184,
 187, 193, 195, 223
 Benedetti, 198, 238, 239
 Beresford, Lord William, 328
 Bernstorff, Count, 297
 Besson, M., 276
 Beust, Count, 182
 Beyens, 164
 Bigge, 319, 333
 Bignet, 109.
 Bismarck, Prince, 168, 172, 173,
 174, 176, 181, 183, 189, 190,
 191 *seq.*, 198, 204, 205, 209,
 238 *seq.*, 246, 247, 293, 294, 296,
 297, 299, 301, 302, 306, 353, 360
 Blessington, Lady, 60
 Bonaparte, Prince Charles, 126
 Bonheur, Rosa, 220
 Bos, C. Du, 33
 Bourgoing, Mme de, 273
 Bourgoing, M. de, 118
 Bouvet, Mdle, 211
 Boyer, General, 296, 298
 Brétagne, Anne de, 141
 Breton, Madam le, 349
Bridge of San Luis Rey, the, 29
 Broglies, the de, 39
 Bruce, Lady Augusta, 93
 Buffet, 266, 268, 269
 Burgoyne, F.-M. Sir J. F., 288 n.
 Burgoyne, Lady, 288, 289
 Burgoyne, Sir John, 288, 289, 290
 Bussac, General, 226
 Busson-Billault, 271

C

Cabot, George, 25
 Cadiz, Duke of, 49
 Cambacérès, Duc de, 84

Camerata, Count, 182
 Canrobert, Maréchale, 273, 335
 Carey, Captain, 321, 322, 328,
 329, 330, 334
 Caro, 182
 Cassagnac, Paul de, 247
 Castel-Bajac, Mlle de, 349
 Castellane, Maréchal de, 32, 64
 Castellane, Mme de, 39
 Castiglione, Contessa, 138, 228
 Castiglione, Count, 138, 139, 153
 Cavour, M., 138, 139, 140, 144,
 178, 227, 301, 352
 Changarnier, General, 298
 Charlotte, Empress, 163, 165, 166,
 197, 198, 199, 200, 358
 Chelmsford, Lord, 320, 321,
 330 n.
 Chevandier, 253
 Chévreau, 257, 261, 263, 264, 265,
 271, 272, 273, 293
 Christina, Queen, 48
 Clarendon, Lord, 38, 51, 97, 140,
 144, 155, 179, 181, 185, 202,
 225
 Clary, Count, 226, 303, 312, 348,
 349
 Clémenceau, M., 361, 362
 Clothilde, Princess, 144, 145, 146,
 147, 246
 Cochrane, Miss Minnie, 346
 Colonna, Prince Prospero, 349
 Conches, Feuillet de, 84
 Conneau, 59, 60, 312
 Consort, Prince, 120, 121, 122,
 123, 124, 141, 212
 Conti, 262
 Cornu, Mme, 110, 307
 Corvisart, Baron, 312
 Cowley, Lord, 55, 64, 65, 75, 111,
 125, 136, 140, 144, 155, 156,
 179, 181, 185, 187, 191, 202,
 223, 247, 297
 Crane, Dr., 278, 280, 281, 285
 Craven, Lady M., 223
 Currie, Lady, 351

D

Daru, 266, 268
 Dato, Señor, 367

Daudet, M. Lucien, 363
 David, Jérôme, 271
 Davillier, General, 226
 Delangle, 137
 Delessert, Mme, 57
 Delessert, 35
 Demidoff, Count, 39, 63, 72
 Derby, Lord, 164
 Desrats, Mme, 286, 287
 Dorrien, Sir Horace Smith, 365
 Douay, General, 226
 Duperré, Charles, 260
 Duruy, 217
 Duval, Raoul, 310

E

Elizabeth, of Austria, 208, 209,
 351
 Ely, Lady, 340
 Emmanuel, King Victor, 144,
 152, 153, 194, 227, 247
 Espartero, 48
 Essling, Princesse d', 84, 99, 251
 Eugénie, Empress, birth, 24, 29,
 30, 34, 35; school, 39-40, 41;
 takes poison, 44-45, 46 *seq.*, 54,
 57 *seq.*, 62, 64 *seq.*; courtship,
 67 *seq.*; letters, 77-80; pre-
 pares for wedding, 81 *seq.*;
 honeymoon, 94 *seq.*; descrip-
 tion, 99-100; and Spanish
 etiquette, 103-4; as spiritu-
 alist, 106-7; and relatives-in-
 law, 110, 111-12; pranks of,
 114 *seq.*, 120 *seq.*; gives
 birth to son, 125 *seq.*; at-
 tempted murder of, 135-6;
 meets Victoria, 141; at
 Annecy, 148-9; in Corsica,
 150; in Morocco, 151;
 quarrels with husband, 153 *seq.*;
 in London, 154; and Mexico,
 162 *seq.*; European policy of,
 168; Catholicism of, 177;
 versus Bismarck, 190 *seq.*; in
 Salzburg, 208-9; character of,
 210 *seq.*, 219; as a reader,
 220 *seq.*; in Athens, 227; in
 Constantinople, 228 *seq.*; in
 Egypt, 230 *seq.*; and Franco-

Empress Eugénie—*continued*.

- Prussian War, 242 ; and invasion of Alsace, 251 ; manifesto to France, 252 ; dismisses Ollivier, 255 ; warns husband off Paris, 258 ; and Sedan, 261 *seq.* ; abdication proposed, 266 *seq.* ; flight, 274 *seq.* ; on French character, 283 ; in England, 290 ; at Chislehurst, 292 ; negotiates with Germans, 294 *seq.* ; negotiations broken off, 297 ; a "fatal error," 300, 301 ; wealth of, 305 ; at Wilhelmshöhe, 303-4, 319, 322 ; and Prince Imperial's death, 323 *seq.* ; in Zululand, 333 *seq.* ; at Farnborough, 338-9 ; *vis-à-vis* Victoria, 343-5 ; and War of 1914, 357 *seq.* ; "tired of life," 364 ; in Spain, 365 ; operation for cataract, 368 ; death, 370.
- Evans, Dr., 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 290, 291
- Evans, Mrs., 289
- Emperor William II of Germany, the, 346, 352.

F

- Favé, 154
- Favre, 265, 284, 293
- Ferdinand VII of Spain, 26, 27, 48
- Ferdinand Max, Archduke, 129 *seq.*
- Fernanda, Luisa, 49, 87
- Ferronière, La, 152, 153
- Feuillet, Octave, 182
- Filon, 250, 254, 258, 262, 264, 266, 293
- Flahault, Count de, 56, 186
- Flanders, Count of, 200
- Fleury, Count, 247
- Flowers, Miss, 41, 307
- Foch, Marshal, 361
- Fortoul, Mme de, 67
- Fourier, 46, 47

- Franz Josef, Emperor, 129, 130, 165, 176, 191, 196 n., 207.
- Frederick, Empress, 352
- Frere, Sir Bartle, 320, 333
- Frossard, General, 296

G

- Galeotti, M., 105
- Galliera, Duchesse de, 39
- Galve, Count de, 66, 67
- Gambetta, 284
- Garibaldi, 352
- Godoy, Marshal, 26
- Goltz, Graf von der, 182, 197
- Gorce, Pierre de la, 203
- Gordon, Mrs., 59, 61
- Gramont, Duc de, 239 *seq.*
- Grange, Marquis de la, 154
- Granville, Lord, 110, 240, 241, 247
- Gravière, J. de la, 257, 274
- Greville, 64, 70, 144
- Grivegnée, M. de, 25
- Gudin, M., 73
- Gull, Sir W., 307
- Gutierrez, 163, 166, 167
- Guzman, Alonzo Perez de, 26
- Guzman, Eugenio de, 26, 28, 31, 42
- Guzman, Luisa Francesca de, 26

H

- Haig, Lady, 357
- Haig, Lord, 361
- Hamilton, Duchess of, 86, 153, 304
- Hamilton, Duke of, 350
- Hanotaux, M. Gabriel, 351
- Harrison, Colonel, 321
- Hausman, Baron, 72
- Hepp, 231
- Hidalgo, José, 162, 163, 165, 166, 167
- Hinard, Damas, 109
- Hohenzollern, Prince Antony of, 234 n.
- Hollings, Miss Hilda, 369

Home, Douglas, 105-6
 Hortense, Queen, 55, 56, 57, 107,
 152, 186, 203
 Howard, Miss, 60, 62, 66, 71, 94,
 95
 Hübner, Count, 92, 97, 104,
 105, 111, 125, 136, 143, 160,
 222
 Huesca, Duke of, 340
 Hugenschmidt, Dr., 140, 228, 364
 Humbert, King, 317

I

Imperial, the Prince, 125 *seq.*, 136,
 143, 146, 147, 150, 198, 201,
 216, 244, 246, 249, 258, 289,
 290, 305, 307, 308 *seq.*, 319 *seq.*,
 321; death of, 322, 324; rash-
 ness of, 328, 329, 333, 334, 339,
 342, 350, 361, 362, 366, 371
 Irving, Washington, 29
 Isabella, Queen, 48, 49, 50, 83,
 164, 165, 205, 212, 238
 Isidore, M., 97, 102, 103

J

Jérôme, King, 71, 86, 91, 132
 Johnson, Mr., 189
 Josephine, 55, 57, 74, 91, 92, 152
 Juarez, 189, 207
 Jurien, Admiral, 248, 252, 266

K

Kirkpatrick, William, 25, 26

L

Laborde, Count A. de, 33, 39
 Lacordaire, Père, 105
 Lambert, Tristan, 249
 Lansdowne, Lord, 353
 Larminat, Marie de, 211, 226,
 231, 232, 306, 311, 312, 338
 La Valette, 192
 Lavissee, 313
 Lebreton, Mme, 273, 276, 277,
 280, 281, 285, 286, 290

Leopold, King, 153, 154, 155, 163,
 164, 167, 189 n., 190
 Leopold of Hohenzollern, 238,
 239, 240
 Lepic, 250
 Lesseps, F. de, 37, 233, 234,
 271
 Lesseps, Jacques de, 348
 Le Sueur, M., 242
 Lézay-Marnésia, 252
 Lhuys, Drouyn de, 73, 96, 171,
 173, 192, 193, 195, 196
 Lincoln, Mrs Abraham, 188
 Lockhart, Dr., 124
 Lopez, 207, 222
 Lucien, Prince, 328
 Lyons, Lord, 222, 224, 241, 247,
 256, 340

M

Macmahon, Maréchal, 258
 Magne, 137
 Mallet, Lady, 338, 357
 Malmesbury, Lord, 48, 60, 102,
 109, 116
 Marat, Colonel, 349
 Margherita, Queen, 317
 Marie Louise, Empress, 92
 Mariette Bey, 230
 Marion, Mlle, 226
 Maspéro, 226
 Mathilde, Princess, 39, 54, 61, 63,
 66, 71 *seq.*, 85, 86, 110, 115, 122,
 136, 145, 147, 160, 289
 Maura, Señor, 367
 Max, Archduke Ferdinand, 129,
 130, 131, 151
 Maximilian, Emperor, 163, 165,
 166, 167, 189, 199, 206, 207
 Mayerling, tragedy of, 351
 Mazzini, 141
 Mellinet, Général de, 271
 Mentschikoff, Prince, 119
 Mercy-Argenteau, Countess de,
 223
 Mérimée, Prosper, 28, 29, 30,
 31, 32 *seq.*, 41 *seq.*, 82, 97, 98,
 102, 115, 179, 183, 190, 201,
 202, 264 n.
 Metternich, Prince Clement, 348

Metternich, Prince R., 111, 156, 159, 160, 161 *seq.*, 174 *seq.*, 180, 184, 188, 189, 193, 196, 207, 208, 212, 242, 247, 248, 259, 266 n., 272, 273, 274, 276, 297
 Metternich, Princess, 134, 160, 161, 206, 221, 259
 Miraflores, Marques de, 50
 Mocquard, 181
 Moltke, General, 240, 241, 243, 294
Moniteur, the, 188
 Montebello, Mme de, 154
 Montholon, M. de, 58, 59
 Montijo, Count of, 42
 Montijo, Maria Manuela, Countess of, 23 *seq.*, 27, 31, 35, 36 *seq.*, 43, 47 *seq.*, 54, 61, 65, 67, 68, 70, 87, 97, 98, 102, 158, 164, 265, 307, 317
 Montmorency, Duc de, 116
 Montpensier, Duc de, 49, 95, 238
 Monts, General de, 303
 Mora, Count de, 348
 Morison, Professor S. E., 25 n.
 Morny, Duc de, 56, 110, 117, 118, 158, 159, 186, 203, 301
 Morny, Duchesse de, 187
 Moskowa, Princesse de la, 349
 Mouchy, Duc de, 116
 Mouchy, Duchesse de, 308, 326, 327
 Moulton, Mrs. C., 184, 201, 222
 Mountjoy, Desmond, 92 n.
 Mülinen, Count, 165
 Murat, Prince, 126, 226, 349
 Murat, Princess, 136

N

Nadaillac, Mme de, 226, 230
 Napoléon, King Jérôme, 309, 310
 Napoleon, Prince, 110, 126, 128, 136, 144, 156, 159, 168, 194, 225, 339, 371
 Napoleon, Prince Victor, 357
 Napoleon, Princess Victor, 357
 Napoleon I, 24, 26, 43, 55, 58, 85, 92, 114, 141, 321
 Napoleon III, Emperor, described, 54, 55, 56; first sees

Eugénie, 54, 57; imprisoned, 58-9; in London, 60; deputy for Paris, 61; President, 61; elected emperor, 63; betrothal, 68 *seq.*; on royal marriages, 73-4; personal appearance of, 100; "a bourgeois," 103; his bastard brother, 110; a ceremonialist, 113; compared with Christ, 123; rebukes Eugénie, 132; demoralised, 136; policy towards Papacy, 152-3; estrangement from wife, 157 *seq.*; a new mistress, 180-1, 191; more mistresses, 223; waning energy, 236, 242; march on Sedan, 259 *seq.*; at Wilhelmshöhe, 295; at Chislehurst, 304; wealth of, 305; illness and death, 307-8, 343, 358, 371
 Narvaez, Ramon, 48
 Nicholas, Czar, 118, 119
 Nigra, Cavaliere, 111, 177, 178, 242, 271, 272, 274, 275, 276
 Noailles, Comte de, 39

O

Offenbach, 182, 202
 Oldoini, Marchesa, 139
 Ollivier, M., 239, 241, 247, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 301
 Orsini, 136, 137, 140, 143

P

Pagerie, Countess Tascher de la, 151
 Paget, Sir J., 307
 Paléologue, M., 351, 353, 362
 Palikao, General, 253, 255, 258, 263, 269, 270
 Palmerston, Lord, 75, 76, 109, 155, 185, 190
 Panizzi, Sir Anthony, 183
 Patrizi, Cardinal, 128
 Pelessier, Maréchal, 273
 Pelletier, Aline, 210, 366, 368, 369
 Peñaranda, Duke of, 357, 365, 371

Persigny, M. de, 110, 158, 159,
186, 203, 253, 255
Personne, La, 364
Philippe, Louis, 56, 60, 283
Picon, Señor, 367
Piennes, Marquis de, 251
Pietri, 333, 339, 349, 358, 359
Pietri, M., 253, 254, 272, 358-9
Pius IX, Pope, 52, 81
Poëze, Mme de la, 226, 266
Poincaré, M., 358
Prim, 238, 243 n.
Primoli, Count G., 349
Pujol, Abbé, 248, 250

R

Rainer, Archduke, 163
Randon, General, 192, 193, 195
Rechberg, 171
Redclyffe, Lord Stratford de, 119
Régnier, 293, 294, 295
Reichstadt, Duke of, 57
Romanones, Count, 367
Roon, General, 240, 294
Rouher, 137, 194, 195, 258
Rowles, Emily, 60
Rowles, Miss, 292
Russell, Lord John, 156

S

Sandor, Countess Pauline. *See*
Metternich, Princess
Santa Cruz, Marquis de, 35
Santoña, Duchess de, 348, 357,
365, 367
Sardinia, King of. *See* Victor
Emmanuel
Saulcy, Mme de, 154
Saxe Coburg, Duke of, 135
Schmitz, General, 263
Serrano, Señor, 238
Sexto, Duque de, 187
Simmons, Sir Lintorn, 311, 329
Slade, 319, 333
Smyth, Miss (now Dame Ethel),
212, 345, 346, 347, 348, 352
Sophie, Archduchess, 208
Spain, King of, 341, 366, 370

Spain, Queen of, 366, 371, 372
Steed, Mr. Wickham, 361-2
Stendhal, 33, 34, 35, 57
Stratford, Lord, 191
Sydney, Lord, 323, 327

T

Tascher de la Pagerie, Count, 73
Tajo, Condesa de Nava de, 340
Tamames, Duchess of, 365
Teba, Cipriano, Count of, 26, 27,
29
Teba, Countess de. *See* Montijo,
de
Thiers, M., 264 n., 298, 301
Ticknor, George, 23, 29
Times, The, 76, 87, 246
Tissot, 298
Trochu, General, 253, 256, 257,
263, 264, 265, 270, 272, 284,
285, 305, 306
Trotter, Lady, 284

V

Vaillant, 255
Valdegamas, Marquis de, 84
Vasa, Princess, 64, 86
Vaudrey, Colonel, 57, 59
Verheuil, Admiral, 55
Verly, Colonel, 116
Vesey, Miss, 357
Victor Emmanuel, King, 139,
144, 145, 155, 156, 227, 317,
352
Victoria, Princess, 121, 123
Victoria, Queen, 51, 64, 70, 120,
121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 141,
144, 153, 154, 155, 164, 179,
185, 202, 212, 291, 318, 319,
320, 322 n., 323, 324, 326, 327,
328, 329, 331, 338, 340, 341,
342, 343, 344, 345, 349, 362

W

Wales, Prince of (afterwards Ed-
ward VII), 202, 206, 296, 326,
350, 353

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| Walewski, Count, 65, 111, 137,
138, 156, 163, 177, 203, 227 | Widal, 364 |
| Walewski, Countess, 116, 139,
145, 191 | Wood, Lady, 333 |
| Washburn, Mr., 277 | Wood, Sir Evelyn, 321, 333 |
| Washington, George, 25 | Woodhouse, 319 |
| | Worth, 160 |

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